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ARTURO GATTI Tragedy

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Volume 88, No. 11 October 2009

The RING

The Reaper Remains Undefeated

Like so many people, I was saddened by the deaths of Alexis Arguello, Arturo Gatti, and Vernon Forrest, but hardly surprised. The surprise is when a fighter lives happily ever after.

Virtually every plaque hanging in the International Boxing Hall of Fame was paid for with heartbreak and pain. And these were the best of the best. What price glory, indeed?

Of course, it's not just fighters to whom bad things happen. It seldom ends well for any of us. Hospitals. Hospices. Nursing homes. Operating rooms. Barrooms. Battlefields. Suicide. Murder. Accident. Disease. One freaking bummer after another.

Animals know when their time is approaching and crawl away somewhere private to await the end alone. The human species makes a ritual out of it. But regardless of the details, it is death that binds all living creatures together. Death and its opposite bookend, birth.

What makes the difference between prizefighters and the rest of us is what we do in between those two events.

Arguello was 57, Gatti was 37, and Forrest 38 when they died, but they packed more into their years than most of us would in a hundred lifetimes. That's undoubtedly of little solace to those who loved them. Grief cannot be assuaged with philosophy, especially when death comes so unexpectedly and in such a violent manner.

We still don't know all the details of what happened to these men, and maybe never will. But whatever went down, it was just the end, not the whole. What went before it was remarkable and will be celebrated in full in a trio of tribute articles in our next issue. But for the time being we're left to mourn and struggle to find answers to unanswerable questions.

That life causes death is the ultimate cosmic tradeoff, the one that makes everything possible and, of course, the one we can't escape. But if we can find the courage to look at the bigger picture, we should compare the tragic deaths of these three boxers to that of Marco Antonio Nazareth.

Nazareth died four days after sustaining a brain hemorrhage in a bout with Omar Chavez (a son of Julio Cesar Chavez) in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, on July 17, just 10 days after Gatti died. Nazareth never won a title, never had a big payday, never lived the high life. Fame and fortune were no more than remote dreams. He was 23 years old with a 4-4 (3) record when he died, just another poor kid trying to pay the bills.

If Nazareth had not died the way he did, we would have never heard of him. But at least he died a boxer's death. There's no way to know for sure, but I suspect that if they had their druthers, Arguello, Gatti, and Forrest would have chosen to go out the way Nazareth did, rather than suffer the final exits destiny threw at them.

At least Nazareth went down swinging.

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[Opening Shot]

Born Free

If Milwaukee's Mike Gonzalez, 10-6-1 (9), was a little uneasy when he signed to fight Uganda's Sharif Bogere, 11-0 (6), in Las Vegas, his heart must have skipped a beat when one of Bogere's—uh—handlers informed him that Sharif had killed that poor lion with his bare hands and taken the head as a souvenir. Well, maybe we're lion about that, but Bogere did keep his unbeaten mark intact with a six-round unanimous decision on the Miguel Vazquez-Breidis Prescott undercard in July.

PHOTO BY CHRIS CAZZONE/FIGHT WIRE IMAGES

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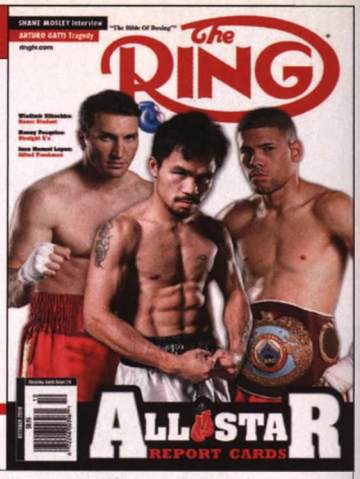

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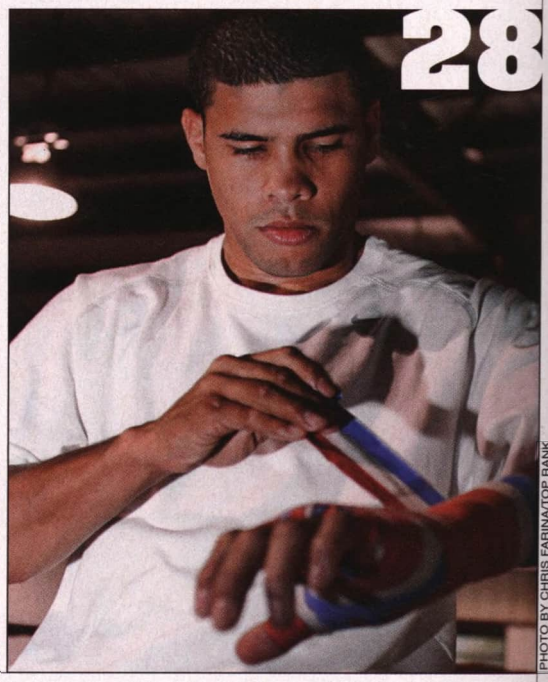

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

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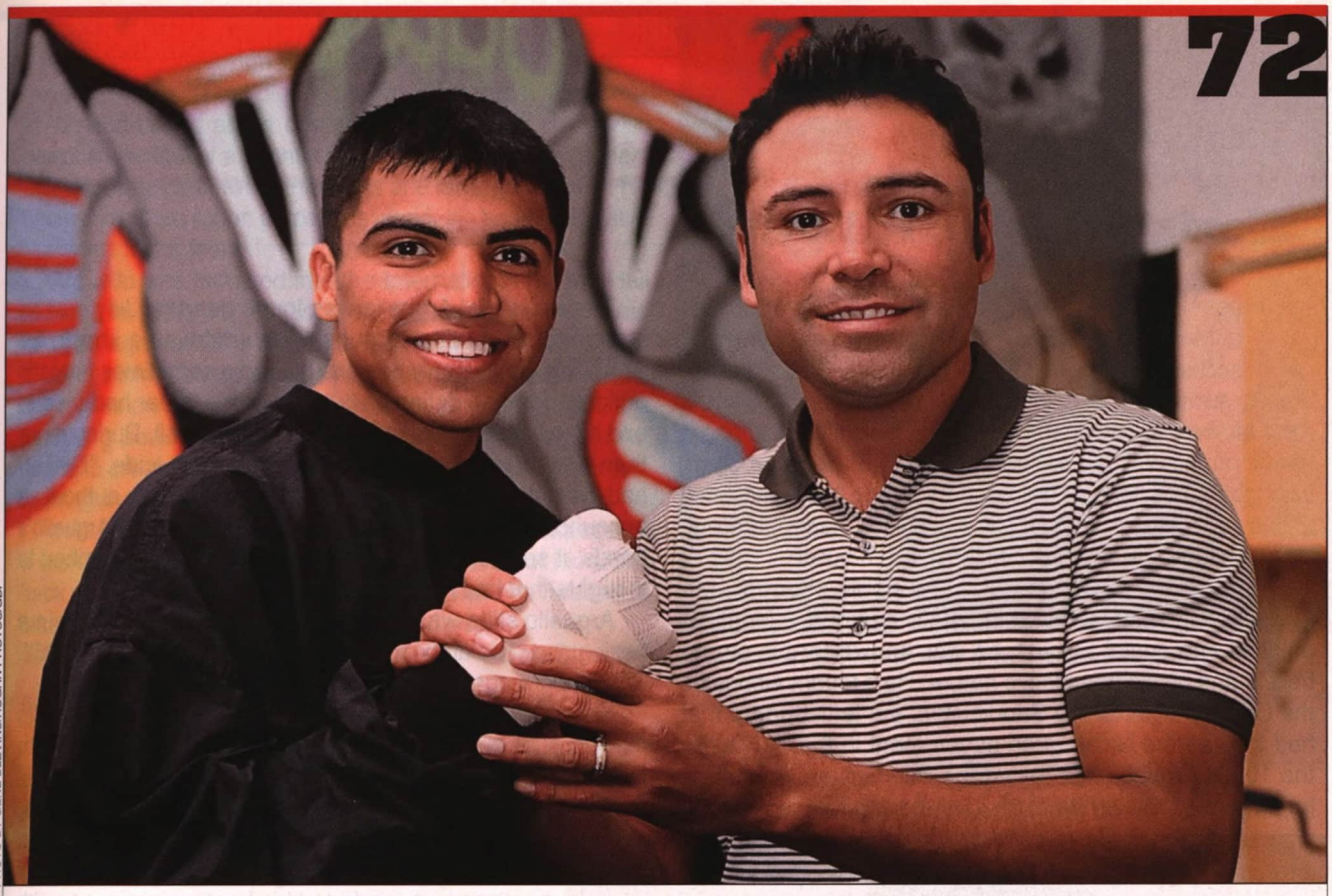

PHOTO BY GENE BLEVINS/HOGAN PHOTOS/GBP

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

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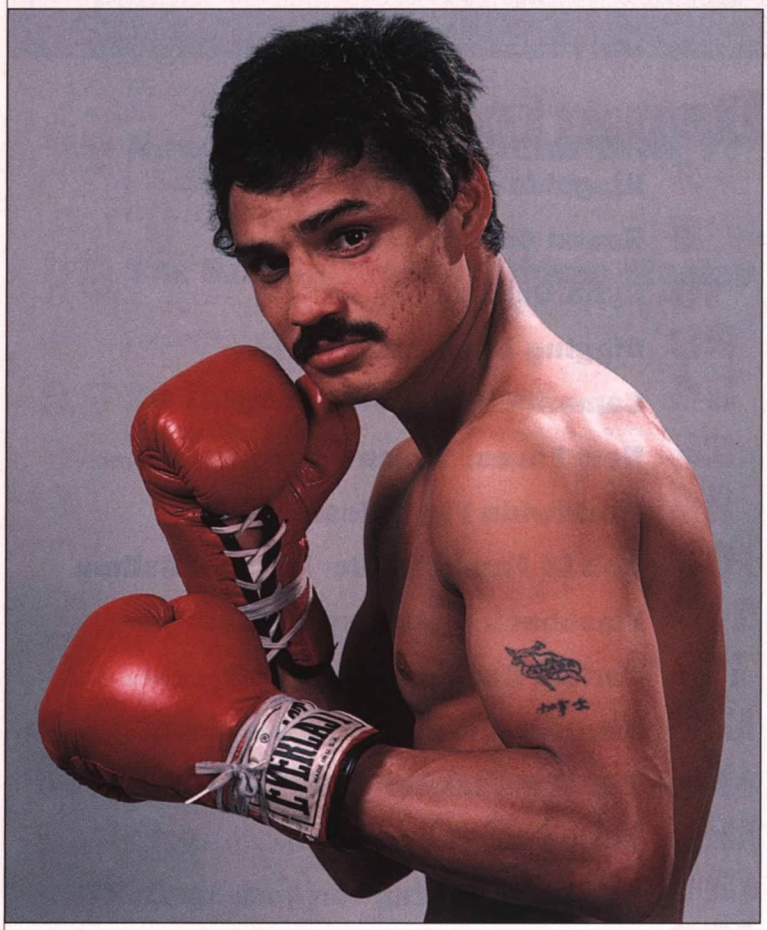
Alexis Arguello, 1952-2009

Last November, Alexis Arguello was elected mayor of Managua. His first month in office was marred by accusations of a rigged election, but Arguello seemed likely to survive the bare-knuckle world of Nicaraguan politics. After all, he'd survived so much else in his life, including a hardscrabble childhood, earthquakes, a cocaine problem, bankruptcy, and bouts of depression so black that he admitted to once spending a night on his boat ("The Champ") cradling a pistol, wanting to end his problems with a bullet.

The dark days were seemingly gone, though, and Arguello had supposedly whipped his demons. A longtime political and social activist, he was known for his strong beliefs and his contemplative nature. He'd fought alongside the Contras against the Sandinistas, the leftist group that had toppled the Nicaraguan government in the 1970s. By the 1990s Arguello had joined the Sandinistas. As mayor, he'd reached the zenith of his post-boxing life.



"The Explosive Thin Man"

The news that Arguello was found dead on July 1 of an apparently self-inflicted gunshot wound was a shock, for Arguello's gentlemanly persona blurred a sometimes fatalistic outlook, perhaps dating back to when his father had tried to end his own life by hurling himself down a well. During more than one interview, Arguello talked about suicide. "I wish I had the guts," he told Peter Heller in 1986. When authorities announced that traces of gunpowder were found on Arguello's hands, it seemed the 57-year-old might have succumbed to thoughts that had haunted him like phantom music.

Arguello's life was turbulent, but he found freedom in a boxing ring. "It is an honor to fight," Arguello told CBS in 1982. "If I am born again, I would choose the same profession."

Known in boxing as "The Explosive Thin Man," Arguello posted a record of 82-8 (65). He defeated the best from featherweight to lightweight, including Ruben Olivares, Bobby Chacon, Bazooka Limon, Cornelius Boza-Edwards, Alfredo Escalera, Jose Luis Ramirez, Jim Watt, and Andy Ganigan. Arguello handed out brutal beatings, yet comforted his beaten opponents with gentle words. After stopping Ray Mancini, Arguello patted the youngster on the head and said, "Keep fighting. I know you can do better."

Arguello often said that his role models were Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson. One could see both of them in Arguello's style; he threw precise, piston-like combinations that harkened back to the greats. Being trained by Eddie Futch, Louis' old sparring partner, added to the linkage. And, like Sugar Ray, Arguello was never less than elegant. You can imagine a young Arguello in Managua, looking at AP photos of Louis and Robinson, admiring their suits and expensive cars, their hair slicked back like sheiks. Dirt poor and hungry, Arguello wanted some of their glamour. He succeeded to such a degree that when associates were asked for comments after his death, they said little about his dark side, and talked instead about his collection of fine suits.

In 1982, after winning title belts at featherweight, junior lightweight, and lightweight, Arguello sought Aaron Pryor's WBA 140-pound title. The bout took place at The Orange Bowl in Miami, where 23,000 spectators roared until the majestic Arguello fell in the 14th and remained unconscious for several scary minutes. THE RING chose the bout as 1982's Fight of the Year, and later, Fight of the Decade. The bout was controversial—Pryor's water bottle was alleged to have contained an illegal substance.

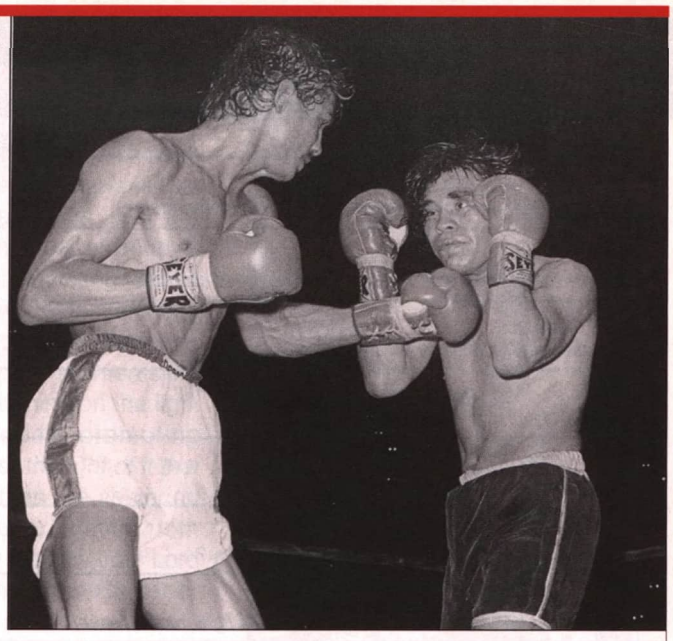
The rematch saw Arguello lose again, this time in 10.

In retirement he dabbled in acting, attempted a comeback at 42, and talked about becoming a promoter. His public persona was that of a brightly smiling, eternally gracious man. Still, the distance between his highs and lows was narrow. He once said, "It's a rotten place, this world. It's an empty place. You won't find a friend."

Arguello was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1992, but his last great moment in boxing came in 1986 against Billy Costello. Costello was an ex-titlist making a comeback, as was Arguello. After a few rounds, the television commentators began questioning Arguello's punching power. On cue, as if he'd heard their comments, Arguello crushed Costello with a picture perfect right cross, winning by fourth-round kayo.

It was the same right cross that Arguello had practiced as a teenager in the barrio, mastering the moves of his idols, back when he believed a good punch was all one needed to blast away the problems of a mean, old world.

—Don Stradley



Arguello hooks Olivares en route to WBA featherweight title

A "Giant" Among Managers

Brandon Jacobs is used to seeing obstacles in his way. The New York Giants' 6'4", 264-pound running back has a unique way of dealing with it on a football field, either bulldozing his way to the end zone or running by defenders. Now the 27-year-old tailback, coming off his best NFL season, is taking on a new obstacle: boxing.

Jacobs obtained his license and in April became the manager of junior welterweight contender Kendall Holt.

"I used to box when I was younger," said Jacobs, who rushed for a career-best 1,089 yards and 15 touchdowns for the Giants in 2008. "Boxing is something I've been around my whole life, and I always had a love for the sport. This, though, is a very big step for me. Kendall is a friend and I told him I'd help him out as his manager. We have nothing written down. It's a hand-shake agreement, but my main job is to get Kendall surrounded by the right people who have his best interest in mind."

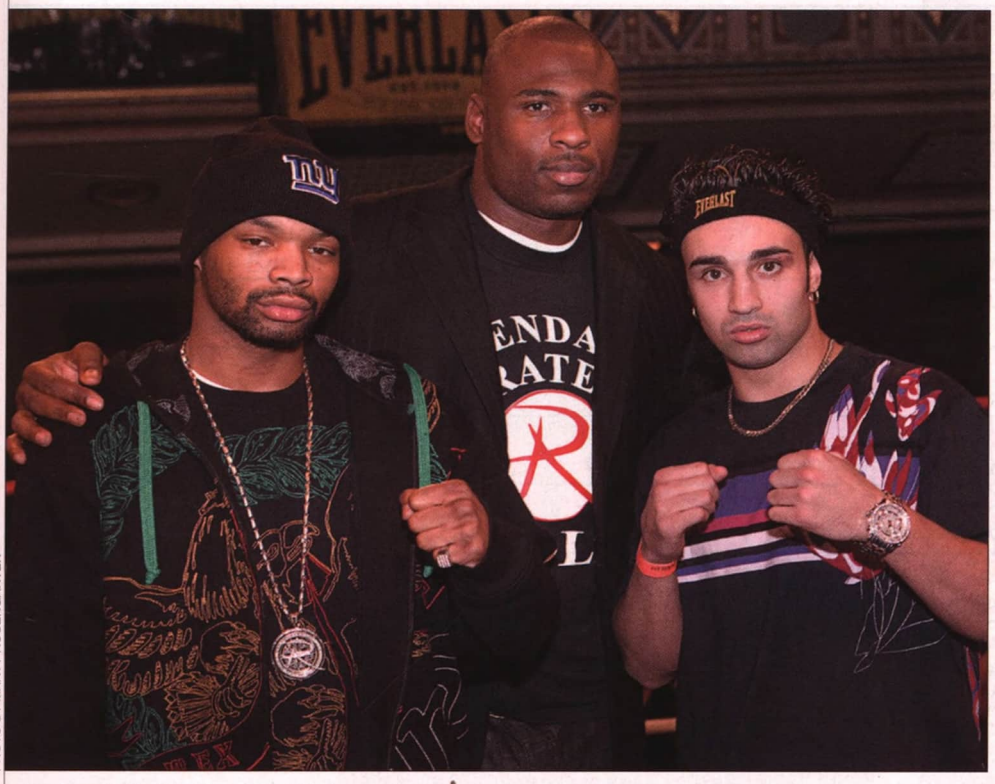


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Jacobs with Holt (left) and Paul Malignaggi

Jacobs and Holt, 25-3 (13), work out together at Ike and Randy's Gym in Paterson, New Jersey. Jacobs spars and hits the heavybag, and even sparked the interest of promoters Lou DiBella and Top Rank's Bob Arum about getting into the ring professionally.

"I thought about it one time, but that window is closing fast," Jacobs said. "I would like to get more involved in the management side of the sport though and try to drive the snakes out of boxing."

—Joseph Santoliquito

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
06/26/09	Deontay Wilder KO 1 Kelsey Arnold	ESPN2	h	D+	D	D
American Olympian faced better opposition in the amateurs						
06/26/09	Daniel Jacobs KO 8 George Walton	ESPN2	m	B-	C	C
Is this a NYC fighter who will deliver on his press clippings?						
06/27/09	Vanes Martirosyan KO 6 Andrey Tsurkan	PPV	jm	B	C+	C+
Tsurkan doesn't just lose, he suffers in his losses						
06/27/09	Yuri Foreman NC 3 Cornelius Bundrage	PPV	jm	B-	B-	D
Clash of styles is stopped after a clash of heads						
06/27/09	Jorge Arce KO 3 Fernando Lumacad	PPV	jb	C+	D	C
What qualified Lumacad for a PPV appearance?						
06/27/09	Juan Manuel Lopez KO 9 Olivier Lontchi	PPV	jf	A-	B	B
Is it too early to consider Juanma for P-4-P status?						
06/27/09	Marcos Maidana KO 6 Victor Ortiz	HBO	jw	B+	A-	A
This is what happens when young contenders fight; more please!						
07/10/09	Chris Henry KO 6 Shaun George	ESPN2	lh	B-	B	B
Who flipped the off button on George after a dominant round one?						
07/10/09	Matt Godfrey W 10 Shawn Hawk	ESPN2	c	B-	C	D+
Hawk lacked skills; Godfrey lacked killer instinct						
07/11/09	Antonio DeMarco KO 9 Anges Adjaho	Showtime	l	B-	B-	C+
Bad acting loses Adjaho a fight he had a chance to win						
07/11/09	Joseph Agbeko W 12 Vic Darchinyan	Showtime	b	A-	A	B+
"King Kong" Agbeko delivers a monster beatdown						
07/17/09	Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. KO 2 Cecilio Santos	Telemundo	jf	B-	C	B-
Son of a former titleholder with world title potential						
07/17/09	Guillermo Rigondeaux KO 1 Robert Guillen	ESPN2	jf	C+	D	C+
Cuban Olympic great counters faster than most champion's lead						
07/17/09	Erislandy Lara W 6 Darnell Boone	ESPN2	jm	C+	C	C-
Lanky stylist fights more often than married couples						
07/17/09	Miguel Vazquez W 10 Breidis Prescott	ESPN2	l	B	B	B-
Volume puncher outwits big hitter who fell in love with his power						
07/24/09	Carlos Velasquez W 6 Juan Nazario	ESPN2	jl	C	B-	C-
These two were like magnets, sticking together whenever they got close						
07/24/09	Jose Beranza W 6 Juan Velasquez	ESPN2	jf	C	B-	B
Beranza proved knowing how to box is still crucial						
07/24/09	Antonio Escalante W 10 Cornelius Lock	ESPN2	jf	B	B-	B-
Bodypunching was key to un-Locking Cornelius						
07/25/09	Hernan Marquez W 10 Juan Esquer	PPV	fl	B-	B	B-
No fighter below 115 pounds should use "Tyson" in his nickname						
07/25/09	Giovanni Segura KO 6 Juanito Rubillar	PPV	jfl	A-	B-	C+
Wild swinging Segura had no intention of winning a decision						
07/25/09	Miguel Acosta KO 9 Urbano Antillon	PPV	l	B+	B	B+
Another hyped prospect kayoed by unknown South American puncher						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Boxing Bookshelf

For what seems like forever, writers have tried to make sense of man's attraction to the sport of pugilism. Precious few have succeeded in explaining the relationship, while many have failed. With her new book, *Boxing: A Cultural History* (Reaktion Books, 480 pages, hardcover, $35), British author Kasia Boddy is one of those who have successfully captured the essence of boxing's grip on us, and she has done so with flying colors.

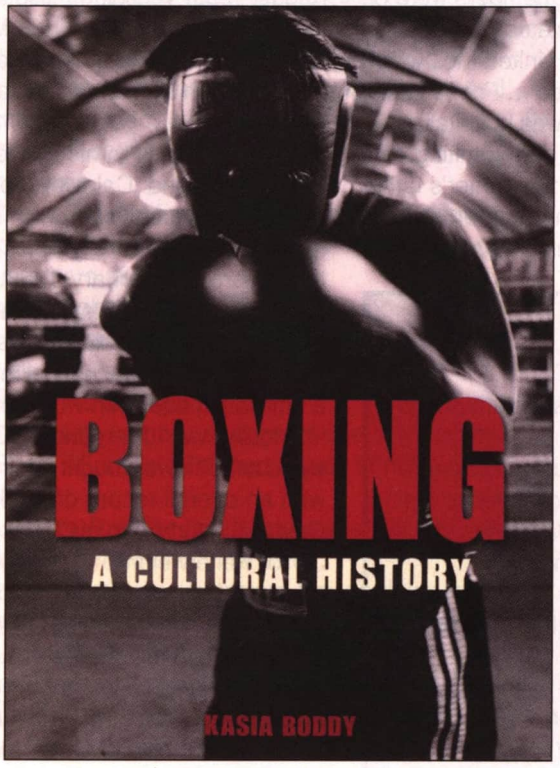
For those who like their boxing books to be fast reads in the airport waiting room, this one is not for you. Indeed, *Boxing: A Cultural History* is so thorough and extensive that it could easily serve as a textbook for a semester-long college comparative literature course. But readers willing to stick with it will be handsomely rewarded.

Boddy, a lecturer in the Department of English at University College London, examines the role of boxing in society—its symbolism, the reasons for our fascination with it, how it has affected behavior, how and why it has been woven into our world and our consciousness more than we realize in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways. Starting in ancient Greece, when fighters went at it wearing nothing but the sharp-edged cestus for gloves, through the golden age of British bare-knuckle boxing, to current-day fistiana, Boddy's exhaustive research unearths so many fascinating facts, comparisons, quotes, references, and analogies that one gets the impression she must have referred to every book ever written, as evidenced by the 55-page Notes section and 14-page bibliography, filmography, and discography that follows the main body of the book.

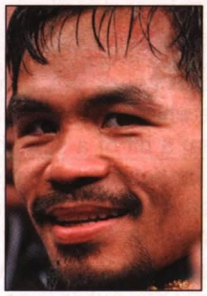
Boddy's tour de force starts slowly with boxing as it relates to Greek and Roman history, but gains momentum as the pages and years goes by. Though once in a while there are analyses that may seem a bit of a stretch, they are few and far between. Most of Boddy's investigation into what boxing means to us, as well as how it has influenced writers, athletes, artists, entertainers, and the general public is so interesting that it is constantly turning on the light bulb above our heads, prompting those magical *I never thought of it that way* moments. Sources are as varied as they are numerous, ranging from Pierce Egan to Andy Warhol, from Lord Byron to Sly Stallone, from Homer to Norman Mailer.

Anybody who reads *Boxing: A Cultural History* from start to finish, no matter how long it takes, will end up considering it time well spent. It will enable them to look at fighters and fighting with additional perspective, enhancing their enjoyment and appreciation of the Sweet Science while gaining a valuable understanding into what motivates its participants as well as its spectators.

—Mike Greenhill



Outside the Ropes



Pacquiao: The busiest man in boxing

Your monthly dose of **Manny Pacquiao** tidbits: The pound-for-pound king has begun shooting a new movie in the Philippines for Golden Lion Films called *Sa Ngalan ng Busabos* (*In The Name Of The Slaves*) ... Philippines President **Gloria Arroyo** has appointed Pacquiao as presidential envoy for peace and understanding. According to the *Manila Bulletin*, Executive Secretary **Eduardo Ermita** announced that Pacquiao is "tasked to forge peace pacts among political warlords, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police, to prevent bloodshed and to conduct interfaith dialogues and another Christian-Muslim events, especially in conflict areas" ... **Andres Sanchez** is being sued by Pacquaio, accused of using Manny's image to sell karaoke microphones. Sanchez will stand trial in Manila for intellectual piracy. Pacquiao wants the court to stop Sanchez' G2K Corp. and In-A-Jiffy Enterprises, owned by the defendant's daughter, from using his name, image, and goodwill to sell their Wow Magic Sing karaoke microphones. Pacquiao endorses a rival brand of microphones known as Extreme Magic Sing ... **Nicolay Valuev** just might be in the process of becoming the Manny Pacquiao of Russia! The WBA heavyweight titleholder has already starred in the film *Stonehead*, in which he portrayed a boxer who lost his memory after a car accident. Now Valuev has become the face of an advertising campaign aimed at helping Russian public services collect payments from debtors. According to reports in Pravda, the campaign has been a "great success" ... A statue of former WBC heavyweight titleholder **Ken Norton** has been erected in his birthplace of Jacksonville, Illinois. Norton, who lives in California, and family members were on hand when the 42-inch, nearly 300-pound statue was unveiled on July 15 at offices of Pathway Services United Inc., which provides help to the developmentally disabled ... Former junior welterweight champion **Ricky Hatton**, 30, was hospitalized in mid-July, suffering from stomach cramps and vomiting. "He was in absolute agony," said **Ray Hatton**, the fighter's father ... **Evangelista Cotto**, the uncle and former trainer of WBO welterweight titleholder **Miguel Cotto**, is suing his nephew for breach of contract and "tortuous acts" that allegedly caused "serious physical and emotional damage," stemming from an altercation in April ... **Johnny Tapia** was taken into custody by the New Mexico Department of Corrections and booked into the Metropolitan Detention Center after violating the terms of his parole. Corrections spokeswoman **Tia Bland** said Tapia traveled to Red River without permission from his parole officer, where he entered a bar and was involved in a verbal confrontation, both of which are violations of his parole ... An article published in *The Star-Ledger* revealed that **Rocky Lockridge**, who held both the IBF and WBA 130-pound titles during a 44-9 (36) pro career (1978-'92), has been homeless and living on the street of Camden, New Jersey, for more than 10 years. Lockridge, 50, admits he has a more than two-decades-old drug problem ... Former manager/trainer **Henry Cortes**, 35, was sentenced to six years in prison for conspiring with a Passaic County (New Jersey) sheriff's officer to distribute 43 kilos of cocaine stolen from an evidence vault. **Alan Souto**, a former detective-sergeant, had previously been sentence to more than seven year ... Undefeated junior middleweight **Austin Trout**, 18-0 (13), was arrested in Las Cruces, New Mexico, and charged with residential and auto burglary. Police said that when he was arrested, Trout, 23, was carrying several items taken from the house ... Massachusetts trainer/manager **Vinnie Vecchione**, 64, died of a heart attack on July 2. Vecchione is best remembered for handling heavyweight **Peter McNeeley**, who fought **Mike Tyson** in August 1995. Vecchione also appeared in a TV commercial with McNeely shortly after the Tyson fight, advertising a pizza chain ... Former bantamweight titleholder **Johnny Caldwell**, 71, died of cancer on July 11 in his native Belfast, Northern Ireland. Caldwell, considered a marvelous technician, won a bronze medal at the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, Australia, and turned pro in February 1958. He won the British flyweight title in 1960, and in May '61 beat **Alphonso Halimi** to win the European Boxing Union's version of the world bantamweight title. After again beating Halimi in a rematch, Caldwell fought a unification bout with world champion **Eder Jofre** in January '62, losing via 10th-round TKO. Although often hampered by eye cuts, Caldwell fought on until October '65, when he retired with an overall record of 29-5-1 (14). After quitting the ring, Caldwell returned to his former occupation as a pipe fitter ... Junior welterweight **Marco "Texano" Nazareth** died four days after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage following a fourth-round knockout at the hands of **Omar Chavez**, 17-0-1 (13), on July 18 in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Nazareth, 4-4 (3), underwent surgery after the fight, but his condition steadily deteriorated. Nazareth had lost three of his last four bouts, two by knockout. Chavez is the son of **Julio Cesar Chavez**.

Caldwell: Dead at 71

Quotable

"No, Leonard. Floyd Mayweather against anyone is the biggest fight in boxing."

—Floyd Mayweather, interrupting advisor Leonard Ellerbe, who was insisting during a press conference that Mayweather-Juan Manuel Marquez, not Mayweather-Manny Pacquiao, is the biggest fight in boxing

"I am so happy about this fight I feel like I'm jumping out of my skin."

—Former light heavyweight champion Glen Johnson, telling the South Florida ***Sun-Sentinel*** *how he feels about his upcoming rematch with Chad Dawson*

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended July 26, 2009

Heavyweights: Eddie Chambers (fifth last issue) advances to three after beating previously undefeated Alexander Dimitrenko (seventh last issue), who drops to 10. The shuffling demotes Ruslan Chagaev (third last issue) and Nicolay Valuev (fourth last issue) one spot each and raises David Haye (eighth last issue), John Ruiz (ninth last issue), and Denis Boytsov (10th last issue) one place each.

Cruiserweights: No changes.

Light Heavyweights: No changes.

Super Middleweights: No changes.

Middleweights: Arthur Abraham (first last issue) departs to fight at 168, and Randy Griffin (sixth last issue) exits due to inactivity, enabling Felix Sturm (second last issue) and Sebastian Sylvester (third last issue) to move up one place each. Paul Williams (fifth last issue) moves up two spots, while everyone from seven through 10 rises two places each. Sebastian Zbik debuts at nine and Winky Wright re-enters the ratings at 10.

Junior Middleweights: The tragic death of Vernon Forrest (second last issue) advances everyone rated three through seven last issue one place each, and allows Kermit Cintron (10th last issue) to rise to seven. Deandre Latimore debuts at eight, replacing Daniel Santos, who has not fought in more than a year. Jamie Moore is new at 10.

Welterweights: No changes.

Junior Welterweights: Amir Khan debuts at 140 at four after decisioning Andreas Kotelnik (fourth last issue), who drops to seven. The reshuffling bumps down Kendall Holt (seventh last issue) to eight, raises Marcos Maidana (10th last issue) to nine, and drops Ricardo Torres (eighth last issue) to 10. Herman Ngoudjo (ninth last issue) leaves after losing three of his last five fights.

Lightweights: Yuri Romanov, Breidis Prescott, and Khan all depart. Romanov (seventh last issue) leaves due to inactivity, Prescott (eighth last issue) was beaten, and Khan (10th last issue) is now at 140. The top six remain the same, but Miguel Vazquez debuts at seven after beating Prescott, Anthony Peterson (ninth last issue) moves to eight, Paulus Moses and Miguel Acosta enter at nine and 10, respectively.

Junior Lightweights: No changes.

Featherweights: No changes.

Junior Featherweights: Rafael Marquez (first last issue) departs to campaign at 126, allowing everyone rated two through 10 to move up one spot each. Jeff Mathebula enters at 10.

Bantamweights: Joseph Agbeko (sixth last issue) moves up to four after dominating Vic Darchinyan. Yonnhy Perez (fourth last issue) falls to five and Silence Mabuza (fifth last issue) drops to six.

Junior Bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: Bernard Inom (ninth last issue) departs due to inactivity. Inom's exit advances Julio Cesar Miranda (10th last issue) to nine, while Luis Concepcion debuts at 10.

Junior Flyweights: Juanito Rubillar (sixth last issue) falls to 10, and everyone rated eight through 10 moves up one place.

Strawweights: Katsunari Takayama (sixth last issue) sinks to 10 after losing to number-one rated Roman Gonzalez. Takayama's demotion raises everyone rated seven through 10 one place each.

Pound-for-pound: Vic Darchinyan (eighth last issue) exits, while Miguel Cotto (ninth last issue) and Celestino Caballero (10th last issue) each move up one place. Paul Williams debuts at 10.

The RING
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Welterweight
2. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Lightweight
3. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
4. **Shane Mosley**
   Welterweight
5. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
6. **Rafael Marquez**
   Junior Featherweight
7. **Nonito Donaire**
   Flyweight
8. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
9. **Celestino Caballero**
   Junior Featherweight
10. **Paul Williams**
    Junior Middleweight/
    Middleweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **ringtv.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended July 26, 2009

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at theringtv.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

PHOTO BY KRAFT ANGERER/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Eddie Chambers continues to climb the heavyweight ratings, jumping from five to three after vanquishing previously unbeaten Alexander Dimitrenko

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 53-3 (47)

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 37-2 (36)
2. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia 17-0 (12)
3. **EDDIE CHAMBERS**
Philadelphia, PA 35-1 (18)
4. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV**
Uzbekistan 25-1-1 (17)
5. **NICOLAY VALUEV**
Russia 50-1 (34)
6. **CHRIS ARREOLA**
Riverside, CA 27-0 (24)
7. **DAVID HAYE**
England 22-1 (21)
8. **JOHN RUIZ**
Chelsea, MA 43-8-1 (29)
9. **DENIS BOYTSOV**
Russia 25-0 (20)
10. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO**
Ukraine 29-1 (19)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 37-1 (27)
2. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 37-5 (11)
3. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Belize 42-12-1 (21)
4. **SERGIO MARTINEZ**
Argentina 44-1-2 (24)
5. **SERGIO MORA**
Los Angeles, CA 21-1-1 (5)
6. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK**
Ukraine 36-0 (22)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 31-2-1 (27)
8. **DEANDRE LATIMORE**
St. Louis, MO 19-2 (16)
9. **JAMES KIRKLAND**
Austin, TX 25-0 (22)
10. **JAMIE MOORE**
England 32-3 (23)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN**
Indonesia 42-0-2 (22)
2. **STEVEN LUEVANO**
La Puente, CA 36-1-1 (15)
3. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ**
Mexico 39-11-1 (23)
4. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 28-4 (20)
5. **JORGE SOLIS**
Mexico 37-2-2 (27)
6. **MARIO SANTIAGO**
Puerto Rico 19-1-1 (14)
7. **MARTIN HONORIO**
Mexico 25-4-1 (13)
8. **RYOL LI LEE**
Japan 13-1-1 (7)
9. **ELIO ROJAS**
Dominican Republic 21-1 (13)
10. **YURIORKIS GAMBOA**
Cuba 15-0 (13)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CELESTINO CABALLERO**
Panama 32-2 (22)
2. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 26-0 (24)
3. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM**
Thailand 38-1 (27)
4. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON**
Mexico 36-2 (31)
5. **STEVE MOLITOR**
Canada 29-1 (11)
6. **BERNARD DUNNE**
Ireland 28-1 (15)
7. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 34-4-3 (21)
8. **RICARDO CORDOBA**
Panama 34-2-2 (21)
9. **JHONNY GONZALEZ**
Mexico 40-7 (34)
10. **JEFF MATHEBULA**
South Africa 22-2-2 (12)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA**
Japan 27-2 (11)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO**
Panama 26-1-1 (8)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO**
Ukraine 21-2-2 (7)
4. **JOSEPH AGBEKO**
Ghana 27-1 (22)
5. **YONNHY PEREZ**
Colombia 19-0 (14)
6. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 22-3 (18)
7. **ABNER MARES**
Mexico 18-0 (11)
8. **NEHOMAR CERMENO**
Venezuela 17-0 (10)
9. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 27-3 (20)
10. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 39-2-1 (29)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: TOMASZ ADAMEK
Poland 38-1 (26)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 22-2 (11)
2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 41-2-1 (31)
3. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 36-3-2 (28)
4. **GIACOBBE FRAGOMENI**
Italy 26-1-1 (10)
5. **MARCO HUCK**
Yugoslavia 25-1 (20)
6. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 29-4-1 (18)
7. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 26-1-1 (19)
8. **TROY ROSS**
Canada 22-1 (15)
9. **OLA AFOLABI**
England 14-1-3 (6)
10. **MATT GODFREY**
Providence, RI 19-1 (10)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 49-5-1 (32)
2. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 28-0 (17)
3. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Jamaica 49-12-2 (33)
4. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 30-0 (17)
5. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 27-6 (19)
6. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 53-5 (39)
7. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 42-4-1 (24)
8. **JEAN PASCAL**
Haiti 23-1 (15)
9. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Romania 26-1 (15)
10. **YUSAF MACK**
Philadelphia, PA 28-2-2 (17)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 41-1 (31)
2. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Romania 24-0 (19)
3. **CARL FROCH**
England 25-0 (21)
4. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 28-2 (21)
5. **SAKIO BIKA**
Cameroon 27-3-2 (17)
6. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 28-1 (20)
7. **KAROLY BALZSAY**
Hungary 21-0 (15)
8. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AR 28-3-1 (17)
9. **ANDRE WARD**
Oakland, CA 19-0 (12)
10. **DENIS INKIN**
Russia 34-1 (24)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 35-1 (31)

1. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 33-2-1 (14)
2. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 31-3 (15)
3. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 37-1 (27)
4. **KHOREN GEVOR**
Armenia 30-4 (16)
5. **DAVID LOPEZ**
Mexico 38-12 (23)
6. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 26-2 (17)
7. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 36-3 (23)
8. **DANIEL GEALE**
Australia 21-1 (13)
9. **SEBASTIAN ZBIK**
Germany 27-0 (10)
10. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-5-1 (25)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 46-5 (39)
2. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 34-1 (27)
3. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Ghana 35-3 (20)
4. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 37-6 (27)
5. **ANDRE BERTO**
Winter Haven, FL 25-0 (19)
6. **CARLOS QUINTANA**
Puerto Rico 26-2 (20)
7. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 29-4 (14)
8. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 37-6 (25)
9. **ISAAC HLATSWAYO**
South Africa 28-1-1 (10)
10. **VYACHESLAV SENCHENKO**
Ukraine 29-0 (20)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 49-3-2 (37)

1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
Palm Springs, CA 24-0 (11)
2. **RICKY HATTON**
England 45-2 (32)
3. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 37-2-2 (22)
4. **AMIR KHAN**
England 21-1 (15)
5. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 26-2 (5)
6. **JUAN URANGO**
Colombia 21-2-1 (16)
7. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Ukraine 31-3-1 (13)
8. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 25-3 (13)
9. **MARCOS MAIDANA**
Argentina 26-1 (25)
10. **RICARDO TORRES**
Colombia 33-2 (29)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
Mexico 50-4-1 (37)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 34-2 (17)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Cuba 36-4-1 (22)
3. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 25-0 (25)
4. **ROLANDO REYES**
Mexico 31-4-2 (20)
5. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 25-2 (21)
6. **ALI FUNEKA**
South Africa 30-2-2 (25)
7. **MIGUEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 25-3 (12)
8. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 28-0 (19)
9. **PAULUS MOSES**
Namibia 25-0 (17)
10. **MIGUEL ACOSTA**
Venezuela 26-3-2 (20)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 48-7-2 (31)
2. **MALCOLM KLASSEN**
South Africa 24-4-2 (15)
3. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 28-4 (11)
4. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
Puerto Rico 22-0-1 (13)
5. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 36-4-1 (19)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-4-1 (34)
7. **JORGE LINARES**
Venezuela 27-0 (18)
8. **NICKY COOK**
England 29-2 (16)
9. **ROBERT GUERRERO**
Gilroy, CA 23-1-1 (16)
10. **SERGEY GULYAKEVICH**
Belarus 26-1 (12)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Armenia 32-2-1 (26)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 33-3 (27)
3. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 13-1 (8)
4. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 29-2-2 (16)
5. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 52-5-1 (40)
6. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
Russia 29-4-1 (9)
7. **KOHEI KONO**
Japan 23-4 (8)
8. **DAIKI KAMEDA**
Japan 14-1 (10)
9. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 30-5-1 (22)
10. **SIMPHIWE NONGQAYI**
South Africa 15-0 (6)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
Philippines 21-1 (14)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 35-2-3 (22)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 72-3-1 (38)
4. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
Thailand 47-1-1 (20)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 30-0-2 (19)
6. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 34-5-2 (15)
7. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 20-0 (13)
8. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
South Africa 23-2 (16)
9. **JULIO CESAR MIRANDA**
Mexico 29-4-1 (22)
10. **LUIS CONCEPCION**
Panama 17-1 (12)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 32-0-1 (6)

1. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 25-2 (15)
2. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 36-5 (20)
3. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Mexico 21-1-1 (17)
4. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 28-2-2 (20)
5. **CESAR CANCHILA**
Colombia 28-2 (22)
6. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 28-3-1 (11)
7. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 24-2 (10)
8. **JUAN CARLOS RECECO**
Argentina 19-1 (10)
9. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 25-3-1 (19)
10. **JUANITO RUBILLAR**
Philippines 46-13-7 (22)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua 24-0 (20)
2. **RAUL GARCIA**
Mexico 26-0-1 (16)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 31-0 (12)
4. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
South Africa 20-0 (15)
5. **MILAN MELINDO**
Philippines 18-0 (5)
6. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 24-1-3 (14)
7. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 23-5-1 (20)
8. **JUAN PALACIOS**
Nicaragua 26-2 (21)
9. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 62-8-5 (31)
10. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 23-4 (9)

By Jeff Ryan

Hey, Floyd, You're Back Of The Pac

Fearlessness comes in many sizes and shapes in boxing. From Charley Polite kissing George Foreman seconds before the opening bell to Mike Tyson biting off a piece of Evander Holyfield's ear. From Bernard Hopkins throwing a Puerto Rican flag to the ground in front of Felix Trinidad's rabid fans in San Juan to Smokin' Joe Frazier swallowing two punches for the opportunity to land just one. From Muhammad Ali taking whacks on a broken jaw from Ken Norton to a round-card girl with cellulite parading past ringside seats filled with drunks.

Some fearlessness is born of pure craziness, some is the byproduct of legitimate toughness, and some is simply the manifestation of an unshakable belief in one's self. It's that fearlessness generated by confidence and achievement that sets Manny Pacquiao apart from the other champions, drawing cards, and pound-for-pound powerhouses in today's game. "Pac-Man's" cojones don't reveal themselves in reckless offensive charges, prefight guarantees, or obscene gestures directed toward a hostile crowd. They reveal themselves in his work schedule and the specific jobs on his slate.

My litmus test for any fighter that the fawning media machine tells us is a true immortal is the one passed by the likes of Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Leonard, Roberto Duran, Hopkins, and a select few others in my lifetime: 1) Does the hyped hero take on the biggest names in and around his division? 2) Has he sometimes jumped from one superfight to another without first wasting everyone's time with meaningless tuneups? 3) does he display a willingness to compete at weights at which he's clearly not his most comfortable? Pacquiao scores quite favorably when judged by those criteria.

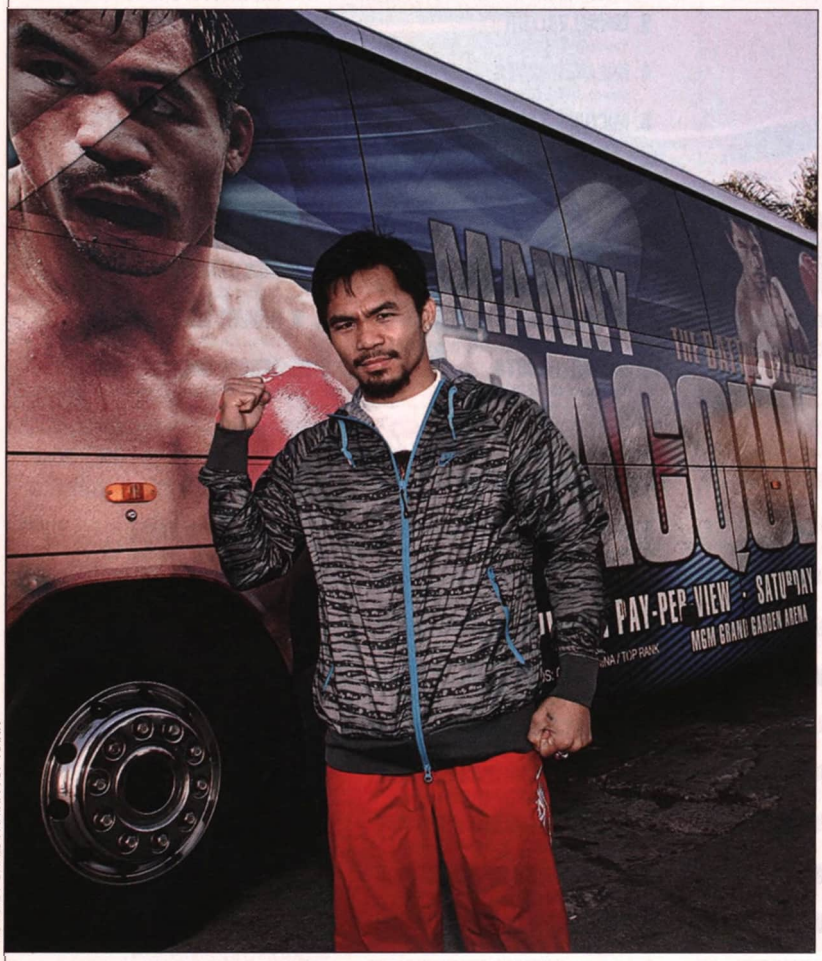


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Ryan is aboard the Pac-Man express

Pac-Man hasn't ever run from tough challenges or taken the hint and avoided opponents who've given him trouble. After losing by decision to Erik Morales in '05, Pacquiao twice kayoed the Mexican a year later. Held to a draw by Juan Manuel Marquez in '04, Pacquiao ignored the warnings of some and faced Marquez in a rematch in '08. At 30, an age when a lighter-weight boxer should be slowing down, the Filipino has actually fast-tracked his career, racing from Oscar De La Hoya to Ricky Hatton to Miguel Cotto without any tuneup pit stop in Palookaville along the way. (And it's likely that Floyd Mayweather or Shane Mosley will be next after Cotto.)

On top of that, Pacquiao has chased the big money and stiffest challenges without getting psyched out by the scale. He debuted as a pro at 106 pounds, but is expected to weigh a career-high 143-to-145 against Cotto. Despite that climb, and some previous indications that he wasn't hitting as hard as he once did, it's now apparent that Pacquiao hasn't lost his punch. His is a remarkable journey that for me is reminiscent of the one taken by Duran, whose chin, hand speed, and power enabled him to capture world titles 25 pounds apart (lightweight/middleweight).

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

After losing to Morales, Pacquiao came back to kayo him ... twice

In the minds of many, Mayweather may still be the top fighter in the world, pound-for-pound, based on his having never lost that designation in the ring. But Pacquiao is the guy who's more deserving of my admiration. Mayweather, the gangsta-wannabe, doesn't fight the way he talks. Conservative and cautious in battle, he exited the game in '07 with the attitude that he'd beaten everybody and had nothing left to prove. Never mind that contenders like Cotto, Mosley, and Paul Williams were on the scene calling for him. In retirement, though, the fiscally troubled "Pretty Boy" discovered he wasn't going to command eight-figure paydays by sitting on his couch.

By the time he climbs back in the ring, against Juan Manuel Marquez, Mayweather will find that the boxing landscape has changed. Pac-Man is now The Man. No longer just an ethnic cult favorite and well-kept secret, he's becoming a mainstream star. Pacquiao threw out the first pitch at a San Francisco Giants game earlier this season. And it was him, not Mayweather, who recently shot a Nike ad with Kobe Bryant, one of sports marketing's hottest properties following the Los Angeles Lakers' latest NBA championship.

If all goes as expected, Pacquiao vs. Mayweather will unfold in 2010. It will probably be contested for an alphabet crown of some sort, but it will also be fought for the hearts and minds of people like me, who've experienced two

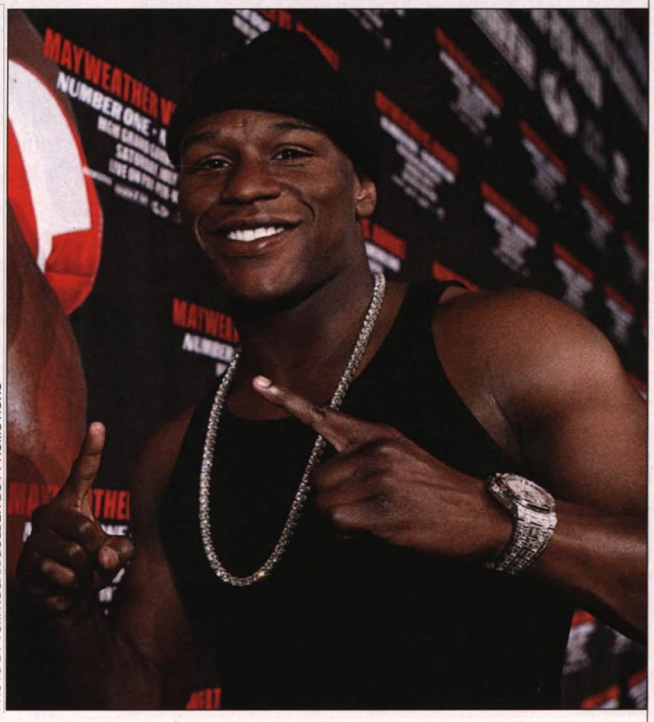


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Sorry, Floyd, but you're not number one anymore

Personal Perceptions:

The last word on everything from a singles hitter to the "Say Haye Kid":

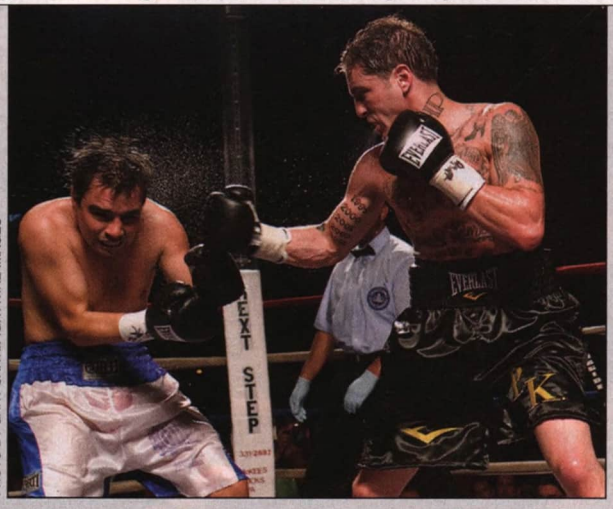


PHOTO BY GARY SARTI/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Spadafora is back ... with a knockout!

•The big news wasn't that Paul Spadafora competed for the first time in 14 months. It's that he scored a knockout! The sixth-round stoppage of Ivan Bustos raised Spaddy's kayo rate to a whopping—get this—40 percent! Spadafora is the anti-Arguello. He couldn't derail the Lionel train set under his Christmas tree if he nailed it with his best shot.

•The death of Michael Jackson reminded us that it was none other than Don King who promoted 1984's Victory Tour, the final set of concerts Michael performed with his brothers (who were then known as The Jacksons after having lost the legal rights to the name The Jackson Five). Only in America—except for eight shows in Canada, of course.

•Don't knock Showtime's super middleweight tournament. True, it's not a pure round-robin, and Lucien Bute should have been invited instead of Jermain Taylor, but anything that cuts through the gridlock and politics and gets contenders fighting each other is a good thing.

•Though Gatti was a nice fighter, he wasn't Hall of Fame material, as knockout defeats in his two biggest opportunities (vs. De La Hoya and Mayweather) should attest. But the feeling here is that the circumstances surrounding his passing at such a young age will garner him enough sympathy votes to land a spot in Canastota.

•It's scary how boxing completely disappears from the general interest sports magazines and talkradio airwaves for months at a time nowadays.

•The recent financial difficulties of Mayweather and Holyfield, guys who once had so much dough that they could have created an economic stimulus package with just the cash they doled out in tips, proves that there's no amount of money in the world that a fighter can't fritter away.

•Johnny Tapia was recently locked up in New Mexico again for a parole violation. Somebody please tell me that my fears are unwarranted and that the guy is going to one day get his life together. On second thought, don't lie to me.

•The must-see event of the summer had to be washed-up heavyweight Bruce Seldon vs. worn-out big man Fres Oquendo for the WBA regional title, whatever that is. If tickets were priced any higher than a slice of pizza, the Illinois attorney general should have investigated.

•Mamma Mia! Wonder if it bothers Marvin Hagler that he's been a professional actor in Italy for years, yet nobody in the States has seen a damn thing he's done. Meanwhile, Tyson (no protégé of Lee Strasberg the last time we checked) was the subject of a full-length feature documentary this year and also had a cameo in *The Hangover*, one of the summer's biggest hits.

•Enough already with the verbal Haye-makers. David Haye ought to spare us all the talk about what he's going to do to this Klitschko or that Klitschko until he's sure that his back is going to hold up as well as his vocal chords do throughout his next training camp.

megastars of differing personalities and styles sitting atop the pound-for-pound ratings in recent years, and I like the Filipino version far better.

The Kings Of Pop: July was a terrible month for the Sweet Science with the deaths of Alexis Arguello and Arturo Gatti. We're talking about two gladiators who thrilled millions, and whose signature punches (the right cross for Arguello and left hook for Gatti) are probably the reason they invented smelling salts.

Arguello, "The Explosive Thin Man," was a personal favorite because, well, the nickname says it all. Tall, skinny guys with crippling power (Bob Foster, the welterweight version of Tommy Hearns) always appealed to me. They served as prime examples to the uninitiated who thought that only fighters built like Earnie Shavers or Tony Zale could hit hard. Arguello's body appeared better suited for tennis or platform diving, but his right hand was so potent that if it connected with the engine of an onrushing freight train, it could have derailed the caboose.

That body type helped Arguello retain his power through repeated climbs in weight, taking him to world titles at featherweight, junior lightweight, and lightweight, and a spot in the International Boxing Hall of Fame. He may have captured a junior welterweight belt as well, had he not run into a fellow legend, Aaron Pryor. Arguello knocked out Hall of Famers Ruben Olivares and Bobby Chacon, and defeated the likes of Alfredo Escalera, Cornelius Boza-Edwards, Bazooka Limon, Jose Luis Ramirez, Ruben Castillo, Ray Mancini, and Jim Watt. The one thing about the Thin Man that wasn't thin was his resume.

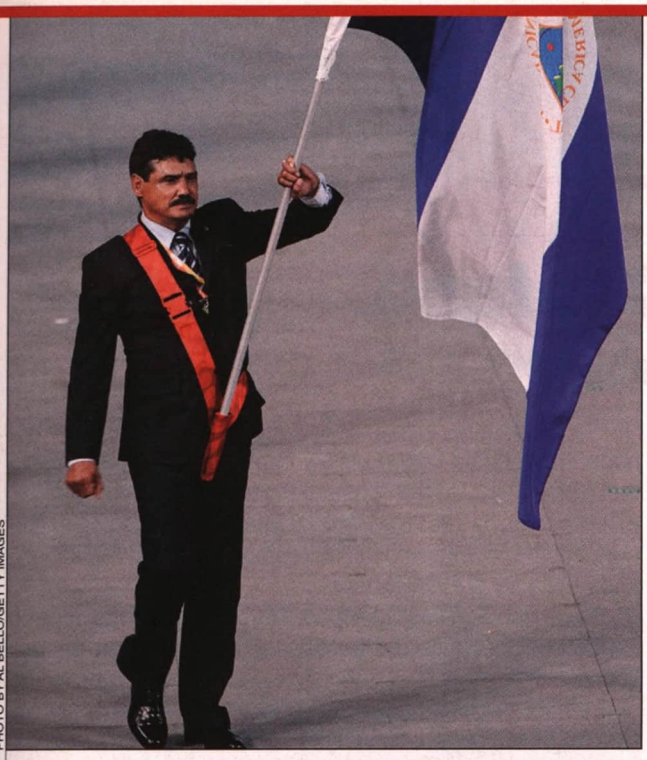


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Arguello proudly carries his country's flag at 2008 Olympics

And yet, my favorite Arguello moment wasn't him detonating a bomb on the point of someone's chin. It was a Miller Lite beer commercial in the '80s in which he co-starred with a certain New York Yankees manager who had a reputation for brawling with everyone from his own players to a marshmallow salesman in a hotel bar. In the TV spot, the Nicaraguan Arguello is standing in a tavern, praising Miller Lite, and saying that since he's been introduced to America's greatest beer, he now wants to meet America's greatest fighter. Puzzled, he asks the crowd around him, "Who is this Billy Martin?" The memory of it still makes me chuckle.

As for Gatti, one can make a case that there's never been a fighter who was better suited for television. The girls tuned in because they thought he was cute. The guys tuned in because within a few rounds, he wasn't cute, having been cut or puffed up around the eyes. But then he'd reveal something truly gorgeous: a whistling hook. And the momentum would shift faster than James Toney's fat rolls on a bobsled run.

Titanic power, a sloppy defense, tender skin, incredible heart, and an unyielding spirit created a perfect storm that made Gatti so damn exciting.

A perfect storm. No wonder they called him "Thunder."■

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Gatti en route to victory in rubber match with Micky Ward

By Ivan Goldman

Ortiz Detractors Confuse Sport With Real Life

We use words like "killer," "battle," "war," and "warrior" in our sport, but they're metaphors. We don't really mean them. At least we're not supposed to. But the night Marcos Maidana stopped Victor Ortiz, HBO's Max Kellerman said on camera that Ortiz made a "shocking" statement when he basically confirmed he gave up. Kellerman, though a decent man, had, with that statement, joined a chorus of folks who confuse sport with real life, the kind that includes real war and real death.

The professional sports world creates artificial situations to raise stakes and excitement for the enjoyment of the audience. But when that artificial situation cuts so close to the bone that it could very possibly cripple or kill a participant, that's when real life is supposed to step in and remind us it's a contest, not a real war. The principal purpose of the referee and the commission is to keep bouts within the boundaries of sanity and civilization.

So we shouldn't really expect Ortiz to fight to the edge of death, or want him to. It's possible to appreciate the special courage of fighters like Diego Corrales without expecting all of them to mimic his balls-to-the-wall behavior or meet his towering level of determination.

We're humbled by the courage of Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali in the "Thrilla In Manila" and yes, thrilled by

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Maidana spears Ortiz with a straight left

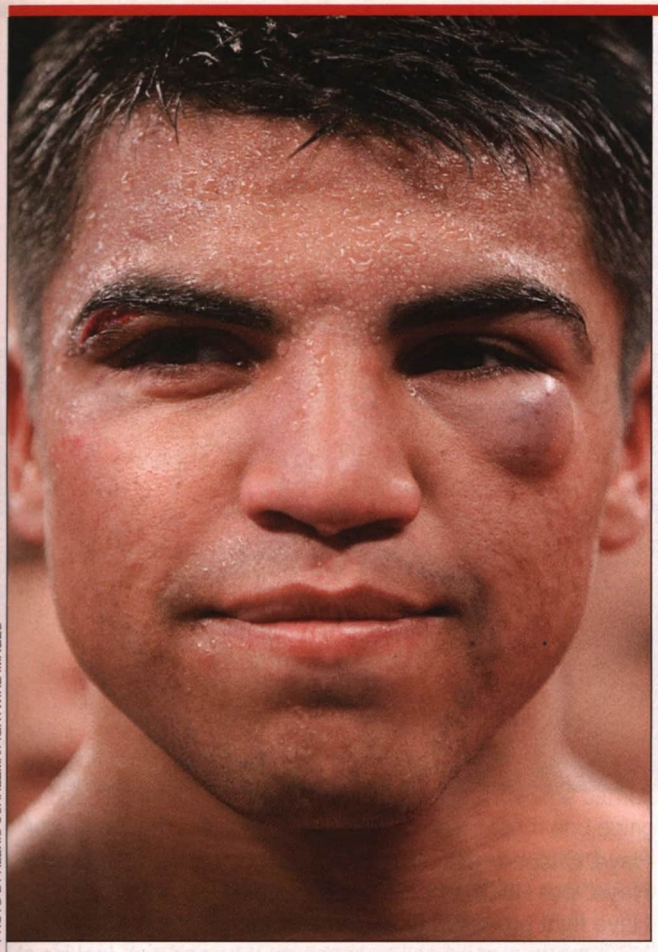


PHOTO BY ALEXIS CUAREZMA/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

How much more punishment was Ortiz expected to absorb?

their violent, surreal battle. But most of us probably understand it would have been a better night for everyone if someone had stepped in earlier to save the fighters from themselves. They were both willing to die as they hammered each other with brick-like, sweat-soaked gloves in the unbearable heat. But the fight didn't kill them; it ruined them instead.

Sometimes, when no one else will do it, the fighter must decide when enough is enough. Israel Vazquez and Genaro Hernandez are two brave fighters who gave up during fights, so I figure they had a good reason. And I pay Ortiz the same respect unless I see evidence to do contrary, which I don't. In fact, the grueling circumstances he experienced in his formative years may very well have blessed him with more wisdom than a young man his age would ordinarily acquire—more wisdom than his detractors.

He was getting blasted with huge right hands he could no longer prevent. He'd also been hammered by a batch of brutal, illegal punches to the back of his head and neck, the kind that, as Harold Lederman once put it, can kill a guy. One eye was closing and the other was saturated with blood.

To satisfy the Kellerman lobby, Ortiz could have re-engaged Maidana and kept standing until additional hard punches finished him off. Or maybe, just maybe, as Corrales did in the 10th round of his first contest against Jose Luis Castillo, he could have somehow summoned the strength to throw a quick, monster shot that would miraculously turn everything around and win the fight. It's possible. It's also possible that a flying pig might swoop down out of the sky to settle on the head of the Oscar De La Hoya statue sitting in front of the Staples Center. But I wouldn't count on it.

Ortiz, after rising from the canvas in the sixth round, shook his head no. He was wobbly, looked just about defenseless and very beat up, and he'd fight another night. Well you know what? I'd like to see that fight. I'll bet a lot of us would. He's one heck of a fighter. As is Maidana.

I expect most of us would rather see a healthy Ortiz go out there again, just as Vazquez and Hernandez did, this time with a better idea of what he wants to do, using the experience of his mistakes against Maidana as a teaching aid. Would it really be preferable for him to give us a repeat of the night Felix Trinidad inflicted irreparable harm on Fernando Vargas as Vargas doggedly rose again and again from the canvas while the referee, Vargas' corner, and the Nevada commission watched hypnotized by the headlights in their skulls?

By an accident of history, the Vargas chief second that night in December 2000 was Eduardo Garcia, the father of Danny Garcia, who managed the Ortiz corner. Maybe in the next moment Danny would have taken a different course than his father and thrown a towel. Maybe not. We'll never know.

Lots of fans depend on TV analysts on the scene to help them interpret what they're seeing. Their words carry more weight than the announcers are sometimes aware of. I predict the day will come when Kellerman sees he was mistaken about 22-year-old Ortiz.

Dueling Anthems: Golden Boy Promotions was so intent on passing the "Golden Boy" crown from De La Hoya to Ortiz that it presented both the U.S. and Mexican national anthems before the fight, just as it used to do for Oscar, and just as Top Rank did when it was Oscar's promoter in earlier days. It's impossible to know how sincerely the fighters feel about this, but I wonder whether anyone even bothered to ask Ortiz what he thought about the idea. Like Oscar, he's a native-born American.

Neither the anthems nor anything else are countering what appears to be a Staples hex on Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. In the previous card there last January, Tijuana's Antonio Margarito was stopped by Shane Mosley and later had his license lifted for trying to compete with loaded gloves.

Heavyweight Vacuum: Though Wladimir Klitschko vs. Ruslan Chagaev was for the heavyweight championship of the world, few Americans were even aware of its existence. That made watching it an odd experience, odder still because over in Germany, approximately 61,000 spectators shelled out plenty of Eurodollars to see it in a soccer stadium. We all knew the heavyweight division had

PHOTO BY TORSTEN SILZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

There were fireworks at the Veltins Arena, just not in the ring

sunk to new depths in Americans' estimation, but the degree of inattention on this one was shocking.

The situation was made odder still when HBO cancelled its participation after Chagaev stepped in for injured David Haye. Chagaev actually held a higher rating than Englishman Haye, but HBO is in the entertainment business, and the Haye fight promised to be more entertaining. In that sense, HBO made a good call because as it turned out, looking at Klitschko-Chagaev was like watching cats nap.

PHOTO BY TORSTEN SILZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Wladimir makes it look easy, but it's not

Except for occasional lapses, Wladimir has reduced the Sweet Science to a repetitive formula—good stiff jab thrown from a distance, occasionally followed by good straight right, also from a distance. No exceptions. It's as though he's reading aloud from a script and the script is a phone book. I'm not sure whether we can blame Klitschko. Hit and don't be hit. That's what the sport boils down to, and it's what he does. He uses his assets to make the predictable outcome a reality. And although he makes it look easy, it isn't. He gets the distance he wants and creates openings because he's a fine athlete who makes subtle moves around the ring that prevent his opponent from sneaking up on him and altering the script. But who wants to watch it? Except for Germans, that is.

Meanwhile, HBO follows a script of its own with the same exactitude

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Does Arreola have the style to make Wladimir entertaining?

as Wladimir. The network could have done Klitschko-Chagaev on the cheap, the way ESPN Classic did when it stepped in to pick up the fight and the way Showtime carried Abraham-Oral, hiring an on-the-spot camera team and doing the commentary from a U.S. studio. That worked well enough. Fans don't always need extraordinary production values.

The U.S. media vacuum was deafening. ESPN carried it on one of its lesser channels and barely mentioned the fight before or after. The Klitschkos probably ought to partner up with an American promoter who could help them get publicity on this side of the water. After all, they both speak English.

Vitali, when he's healthy (a rare circumstance), can conceivably provide the heavyweight excitement fans crave. But Wladimir could sure use Chris Arreola as an opponent. An American and a fierce competitor, he doesn't allow opponents to read phone books on his time. Arreola might even have what it takes to attract U.S. media attention back to boxing.

Magoo One: After Mahir Oral went down three times in the 10th round against Arthur Abraham, referee Earl Brown was actually wiping Oral's gloves and preparing to send him out there again. Fortunately, Oral's corner threw the towel in so we never found out how many times the powerful Abraham could slam a bobble-headed, semi-conscious human being to the canvas. What does Brown do for relaxation? Watch car crash videos?

Magoo Two: How many rabbit punches from Marcos Maidana to the brain stem of Victor Ortiz would it take for referee Raul Caiz Sr. to take serious notice? Obviously, too many. This repeated and dangerous foul merited more than mild warnings.

Magoo Three: To Ortiz' trainer Danny Garcia. When you want your overexcited fighter to relax and follow the game plan, you won't achieve results by shouting at him between rounds, which only further electrifies his nerve endings. You want calm? Start by being calm.

Magoo Four: To Max Kellerman, for reasons cited above. ■

PHOTO BY MATTHIAS KERN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Referee Earl Brown finally calls an overdue halt to Abraham-Oral

[Camera Clicks]

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Was there anything Juan Manuel Lopez could do to make his June mismatch in Atlantic City against the defensive Olivier Lontchi compelling? We say, "neigh." Still, he tried his best to drum up attention by riding a horse along the boardwalk—which moves into second place on the "pointless Juanma prefight gimmick" list, just behind his spectacular public haircut bit in 2007.

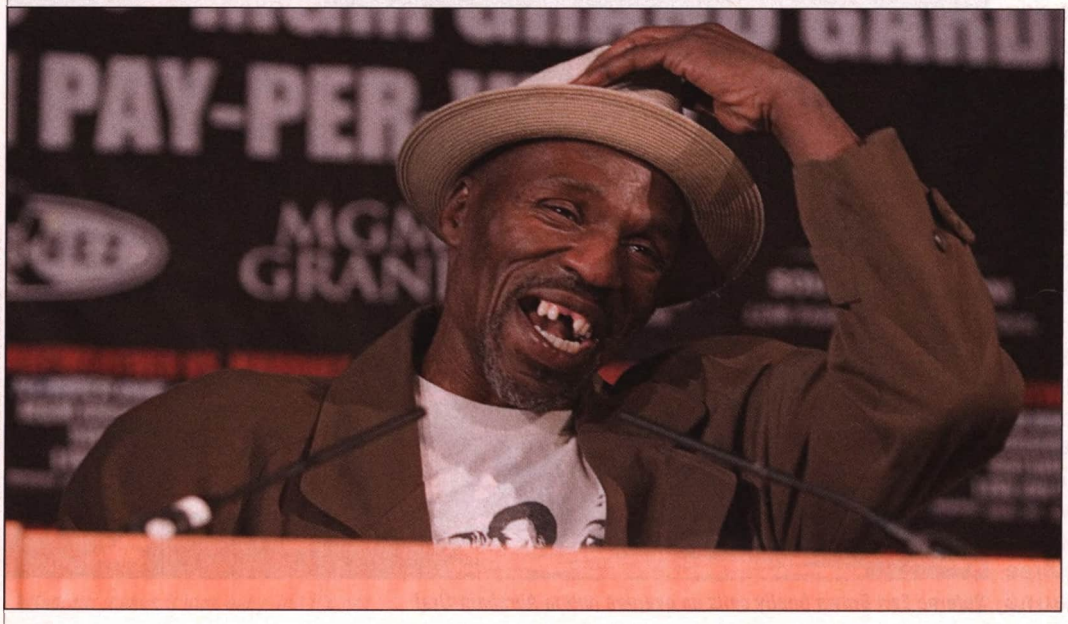


PHOTO BY MARK CHAPMAN/HOGAN PHOTOS/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Not since the prime of Wilbert "Vampire" Johnson has boxing seen pearly whites (or the lack thereof) quite like this. It's been rumored that Floyd Mayweather is returning to boxing because he needs money, and now we know what he needs money for: to pay for his uncle Roger's orthodontic work.

PHOTO BY ALLAN RECTO

Another month, another photo of THE RING Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins doing his trademark finger-point at a RING belt. This time the recipient was world junior welterweight champion Manny Pacquiao, who received his championship belt hours before the Miguel Cotto-Joshua Clottey fight in New York. By the way, Collins should consider himself lucky: Most people don't get to stand this close to Pac-Man's cocked left fist and leave the room under their own power.

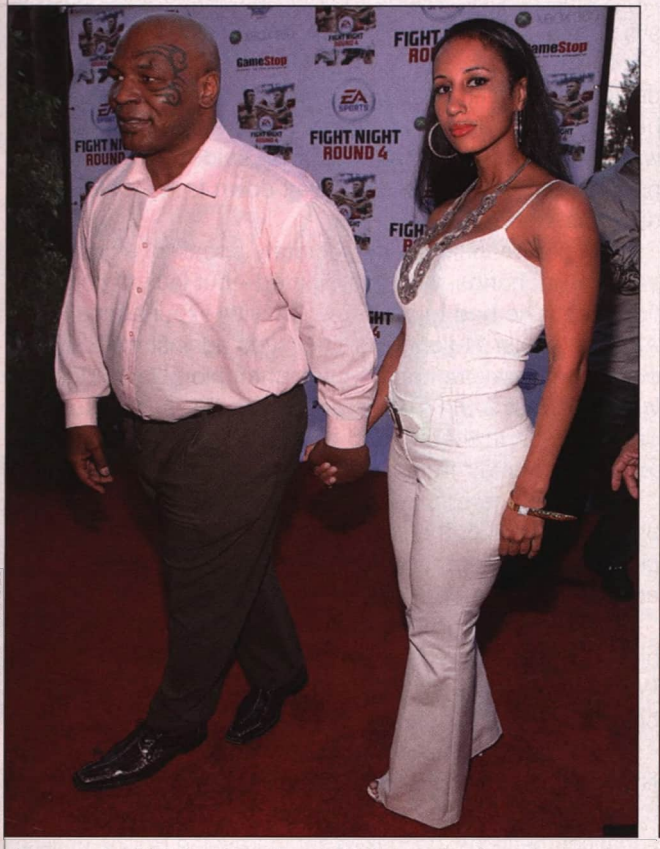


PHOTO BY ANGELA WEISS/GETTY IMAGES

They say the third time is a charm. But then again, they also say three strikes and you're out. We're not sure which will apply to Mike Tyson as he attempts marriage number three. "Iron Mike" and the new Mrs. Tyson, Lahika Spicer, made a public appearance in June at the launch of the video game Fight Night Round 4 in West Hollywood. And it would be nice to believe that Spicer actually loves Tyson for who he is, since she clearly didn't marry him for his money or his body.

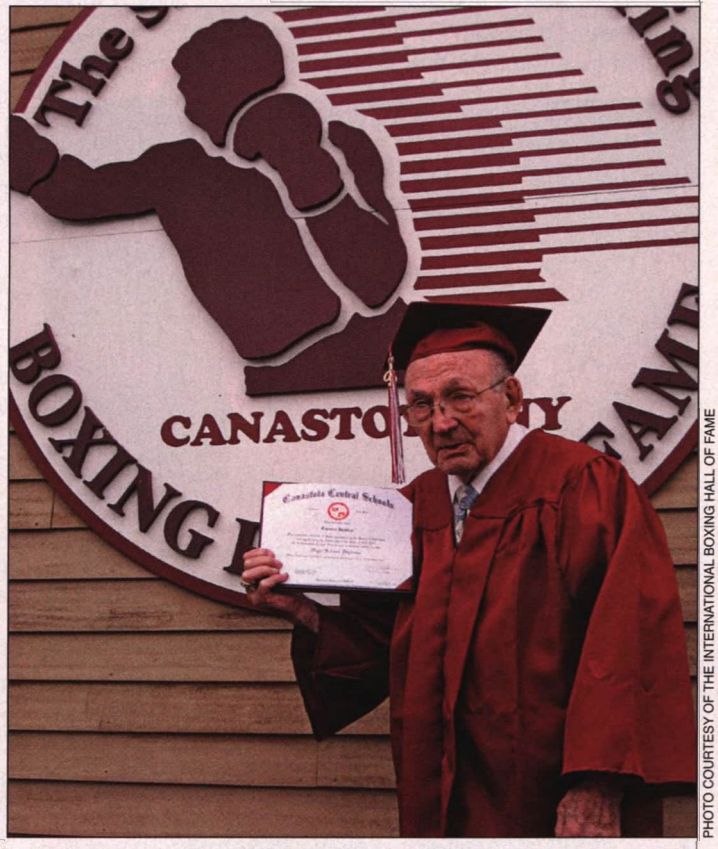


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOXING HALL OF FAME

Following in the footsteps of the great Thornton Mellon, legendary former welterweight and middleweight champion Carmen Basilio has gone back to school and received his high school diploma from Canastota High. Basilio missed on graduating back in the 1940s because he left to serve in the Marines during World War II, but at age 82, he's finally a high school grad. Now it's time for Carmen to head off to college, where he'll quickly become the most popular freshman on campus thanks to his ability to legally buy everyone beer.

By Gavin Evans
PHOTOS BY BRYN LENNON/GETTY IMAGES

Tyson Fury Heavyweight

The doctor chuckled when John Fury announced the name "Tyson" for his seven weeks premature son. The lad weighed in at an even one pound, and they gave him a mere 20 percent chance of survival—hardly surprising since he lost consciousness three times. "He's going to be little a fella," the doctor predicted. "Gypsy John," shook his head. "Just give him time ..."

The boy christened Tyson Luke Fury grew to 6'8½", which, he decided, was a fine size for a boxer. It helped that he came from fighting stock. He was raised in Wilmslow, Cheshire, near Manchester, but his people were Irish travellers—a community with a rich tradition of fighting men. Gypsy John was a professional who once fought Henry Akinwande. Two of his uncles boxed and his grandfather, Tiger Gorman, was an Irish heavyweight in the 1960s.

"I was always fascinated by boxing and always knew that's what I'd do with my life," Tyson said. "At first, I thought I'd just go straight to the pros, but instead I joined Jimmy Egan's gym and had my first amateur fight at 16."

Fury had followed the traveller tradition of leaving school before he turned 12 and helping out with his dad's work (auctioning cars and vans). "I come from that tradition—you leave when you can read and write because you're never going to get an office job," he said.

But he did tend to avoid other traditions. "I've never drunk, never smoked, never taken drugs," he proclaimed. "I don't go clubbing and never had trouble with the police. I'm pretty passive outside the ring, but if someone takes a swing at me, they're going to get it back."

His one vice was junk food. "I was always extremely dedicated, training harder than anyone else, but I've always been one for eating—including cakes and sweets—and I was overweight as an amateur," he said. "I got up to 265 pounds, but then worked my way down to about 248 and did much better."

Fury's potential was immediately apparent—good balance, quick hands, well-coordinated—but lack of competition meant he had to be thrown in with experienced men. At 17, after just 11 fights, he was pitted against the 23-year-old Commonwealth heavyweight champion David Price to whom he lost a 22-8 decision. "I was the aggressor and dropped him in the second round, and after that he just jabbed and held," Fury recalled.

Fury won the bronze medal in the World Junior Championships in 2006, the silver in the European Junior Championships and the British (ABA) championships in 2008, and ended his amateur run with a record of 30-4 (26).

His greatest regret was missing out on the 2008 Olympics. He called for a box-off with Price at the time of the '08 World Championships and when this was refused, turned his attentions to Ireland.

Although he speaks with a Mancunian accent, his identity is bound up with his Irish heritage, and he regularly visits the old country. After twice representing Ireland in international competitions, he looked set to travel to Beijing until he was confronted with a protest about his eligibility. "They demanded my dad's birth certificate, and although he was born in Galway, he had no birth papers so I couldn't prove it. It was the biggest disappointment of my life. When I watched

(Continued on Page 111)

Pro Record

2008		
Dec. 6	Bela Gyongyosi, Nottingham, U.K.	KO 1
2009		
Jan. 17	Marcel Zeller, Wigan, U.K.	KO 3
Feb. 28	Daniil Peretyatko, Norwich, U.K.	KO 2
March 14	Lee Swaby, Birmingham, U.K.	KO 4
April 11	Mathew Ellis, London, U.K.	KO 1
May 23	Scott Belshaw, Watford, U.K.	KO 2
July 18	Aleksandrs Selezen, London	KO 3

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
7	7	0	0	7

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- Attend the Quaker State Durability Series fight in Las Vegas

SATURDAY

- Meet Tony Pedregón
- Attend NHRA race at Las Vegas Motor Speedway

SUNDAY

- Attend NHRA race at Las Vegas Motor Speedway
- Hang out in the Pedregón pits

VIERNES

- Conoce personalidades de Golden Boy**
- Asiste a la pelea de la Serie de Durabilidad Quaker State en Las Vegas

SABADO

- Conoce a Tony Pedregón
- Asiste a la carrera de la NHRA en Las Vegas Motor Speedway

DOMINGO

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- Disfruta de un día en los pits de Tony Pedregón

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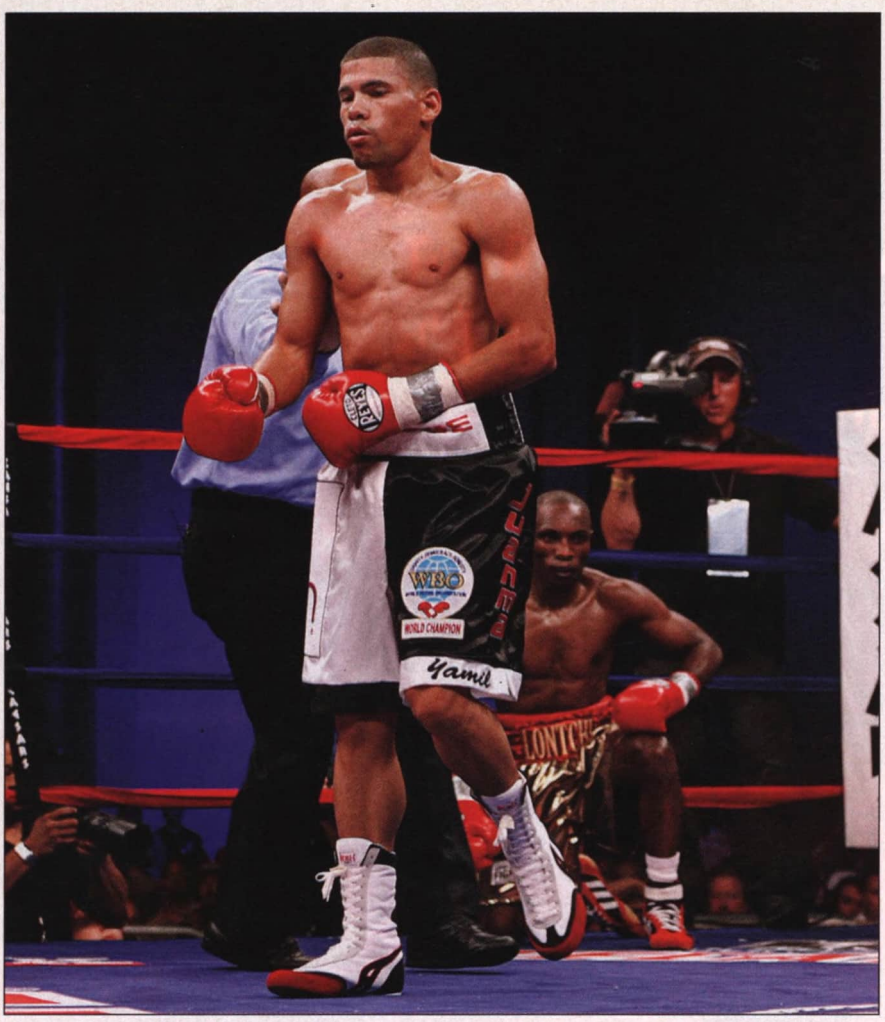
Juan Manuel Lopez has the punch, the style, and the charisma—and he's already a megastar in his native Puerto Rico. But Top Rank chief Bob Arum knows that for the 26-year-old junior featherweight to really make it big in this sport, he has to go about ...

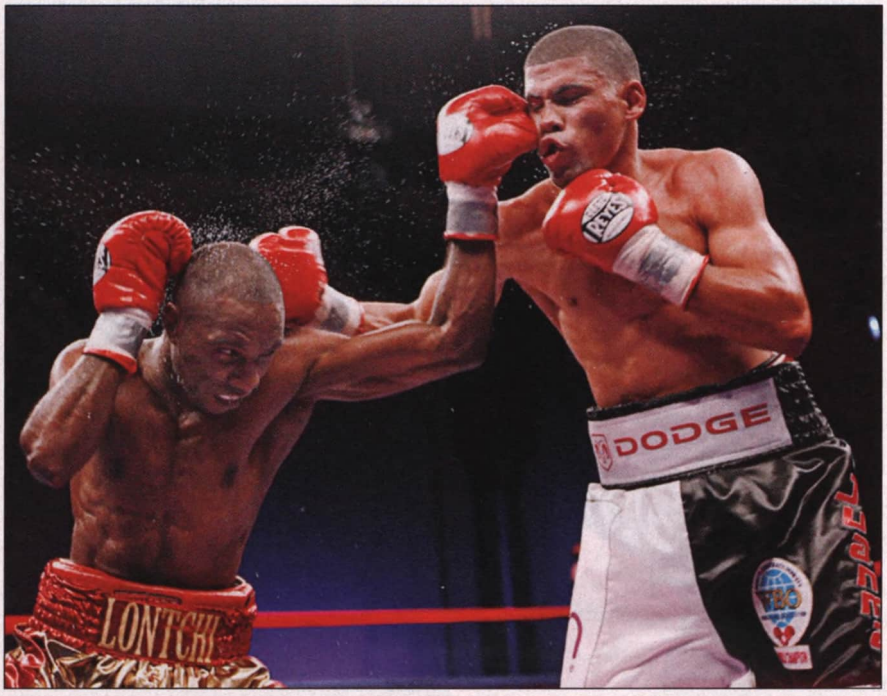
THE BUILDING OF JUANMA IN AMERICA

Lopez was showcased to American fight fans in mid-June against Olivier Lontchi, who was slick, fast, and defensive, though not elusive enough to evade the punching power of "Juanma."

By Joseph Santoliquito
PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Greatness played in the background as a medley of Michael Jackson's music blared into the muggy air of the Adrian Phillips Ballroom in Atlantic City. Juan Manuel Lopez just nodded and grinned as he made his ring entrance, a potential boxing great acknowledging the King of Pop, who had died two days earlier. The world knew Michael Jackson. The boxing world is getting to know Lopez.





Juanma walks away after knocking Lontchi to the canvas for the first time (above). Lontchi wound up surviving the second-round knockdown and gave Lopez a battle, even winning the fifth round (below) on all three official scorecards.

Just his name is already enough to evoke visions of opponents crashing to the canvas, hapless victims of Lopez' murderous punches. At least it is to hardcore fight fans. They know "Juanma." They know him well, from his ring entrances, with shoulder shimmies and bouncing feet, to his smiling face each time he lands a punch.

But being popular with the hardcore isn't enough, and Top Rank's Bob Arum is working hard to grow Lopez' fan base. The start of that process came when Arum gave Lopez his own stage, headlining his first American show the evening of June 27. Still, there were only around 2,800 people in the ballroom, roughly three-quarters capacity.

The southpaw slugger did what he was supposed to do on Top Rank's "Latin Fury 9" pay-per-view, stopping Olivier Lontchi in the ninth round. Lopez retained a minor belt and upped his presence in THE RING's 122-pound ratings, where he sits behind only Celestino Caballero. But Lopez, 26-0 (24), wants something a little more than just three-quarter filled B-level arenas on small PPV cards against dubious opponents. He wants a *24/7* series of his own and a sold-out Madison Square Garden on an HBO PPV. He wants his chance to show what he can really do against the best.

Juanma just might already be *the best* 122-pounder in the world. It's a matter of getting the chance to prove it.

"It's all I ask," said Lopez, sitting in his dressing room moments after dispatching Lontchi, speaking through translator Ricardo Jimenez of Top Rank. "I think I am a superstar in boxing right now. I don't know if I would have said that about myself two years ago, or even last year. But I think that way now. I like pleasing the fans; I like showing what I can do.

"Beating Lontchi wasn't easy. He wasn't here to fight, he was here to run around and force me to chase him. I'm pleased I won, but I could have done better. I eventually got him. I knew I would. The bottom line is that I stopped him—and that's what my fans expect me to do."

Now Arum is hoping American fans will catch "Juanma Mania," which has

After some advice from his corner, Lopez started to get back into a rhythm and punish Lontchi's body. A barrage of shots to Lontchi's ribs got the attention of the Montreal-based fighter from Cameroon, who said the bodyshots "really hurt" him.

struck the hearts of fight fans in Puerto Rico, but has not impacted the business on the U.S. mainland the way Miguel Cotto has. Well, not yet anyway.

The interesting twist is that Lopez could already be Puerto Rico's best fighter—possibly more talented than Cotto, who is still highly rated and highly marketable, though has recently shown signs of slipping. Cotto was pushed to the edge by Joshua Clottey, not exactly displaying the kind of potency a pound-for-pound rated fighter should. In fact, Cotto seems to be leaking oil and grinding down as his career nears its climax against Manny Pacquiao, in November in Las Vegas.

Meanwhile, Lopez is gaining momentum. So it's easy to understand why Arum made the trek from Las Vegas to Atlantic City, constantly piecing together the remnants of the June 27 card. Almost every major fight on the original card, which was supposed to be headlined by RING world middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik's title defense against Sergio Mora, fell through, including a potentially intriguing match between bantamweights Fernando Montiel and Erik Morel.

But Arum persevered for a reason.

"Because I think Juanma is a superstar," Arum said. "There's no question I'm gearing Juanma up for superstardom, like we have Miguel Cotto. We have some real good plans for him. I know we can make Juanma as big a star as we have Cotto."

One of the plans Arum discussed was the possibility of moving Lopez up to 126 pounds and building a fight between the former 2004 Puerto Rican Olympian and Yuriorkis Gamboa, the 2004 Cuban flyweight gold medalist who is co-promoted by Top Rank and Arena-Box. That's assuming Gamboa, 15-0 (13) and rated 10th by THE RING at featherweight, gets by journeyman Whyber Garcia by the time this magazine reaches the newsstands.

Arum was so positive his plans would come to fruition that he was even planning dates for a Lopez-Gamboa showdown sometime next year at Madison Square Garden. As a precursor, there would be a co-feature headlined by Lopez and Gamboa, against opponents to be named, at the Garden in October.

"That's the hope," Arum said. "We need to build up what I think is a huge fight that people would want to see. Who can stand up to Juanma's power and the pressure he puts on? The only one I can think of who can do that is Gamboa, and we fortunately happen to represent both fighters. It's a perfect fit for them and us."

How about the freakishly tall-for-a-junior-featherweight Caballero? It poses some interesting prospects, with Caballero at 5'11" four inches taller than

Lopez eventually broke down Lontchi in the ninth, using a straight left to send him to the floor for a second time. Lontchi beat the count, but knew better than to go another round with Juanma, quitting on his stool after the ninth.

the 5'7" Juanma and holding a four-inch reach advantage (72 inches to Lopez' 68 inches). Caballero has also defeated three top-10 RING-rated fighters (Daniel Ponce De Leon, Steve Molitor, and Jeff Mathebula), while Lopez has vanquished just one, Ponce De Leon. And while Arum doesn't think there's much money in that fight, Juanma wouldn't mind.

"I'll do what the company tells me to do, but if Caballero is out there, and it could happen, yes, it's a fight I'd want," Lopez said. "I think a lot of people want me to face Caballero. I'll fight whomever they put in front of me. I still think I need to prove myself, and facing and beating someone like Caballero, who many believe is the best [at 122], would put me there."

Caballero would certainly be all for it.

"I understand the business of boxing and I know that Lopez' promoter has a plan for him that involves everybody but me," Caballero said. "But if what I believe is true, Lopez wants more than easy fights; he wants to be the best in the world. The only way he can leave the super bantamweight division as the best is to beat me. There's a lot of talk of Lopez being the next Wilfredo Gomez. Well, Lopez has to remember that Gomez didn't move up to featherweight until he cleaned out everyone at 122 pounds. I guess we'll find out soon if Lopez has 'Bazooka's' fighting spirit."

Still, Lopez has not ruled out his ultimate goal of meeting Israel Vazquez or Rafael Marquez, though he realizes that's a door that's closing fast.

"They're probably going to be fighting each other again," Juanma said. "There's no room left for me there. If it were up to me, I'd fight either Marquez or Vazquez. But I really don't know how much either of them has left after beating each other up. They've been in wars. So I may have to look at other guys."

Then again, maybe not.

"Some guys you just respect for who they are and what they can do, and you can't really judge them by the caliber of the competition," said Bruce Trampler, Top Rank's matchmaker. "I think Juanma is in that category. You have to admit he's exciting, and he certainly has charisma. Everyone who comes in contact with this kid and sees him fight loves him. You have to remember, he's just 26 years old, still a work in progress. Juanma was on a seek-and-destroy mission against Lontchi as he always is, but overall, he became a better fighter for the experience.

"Juanma, his trainer, and co-promoter, they haven't put any restrictions upon us at all as to who he fights, unlike some guys who'd like to build and then say this guy has a bad style for them, or the timing isn't right. That's never been the case with Juanma."

Lontchi, 18-1-2 (8), proved to be a tougher challenge than expected. The 26-year-old Montreal, Quebec, resident, by way of Cameroon, didn't have much pop in his punch, but he wasn't exactly playing along with Lopez' plans either. He moved, ducked, had good head movement and solid footwork, but his defensive skills weren't enough to hold off the constantly charging Lopez.

"He just doesn't stop, he keeps coming at you," Lontchi said about Lopez after the fight. "His bodypunching really hurt. I got hit very hard in the fourth round in the ribs. From there, I made a decision to start moving more. It really hurt me. He has very good combinations. He's very powerful, he hits hard. You can't get away from him."

In the Lontchi fight, fans were exposed to a different side of Lopez—a more patient, calculating fighter willing to break down a defensive runner than

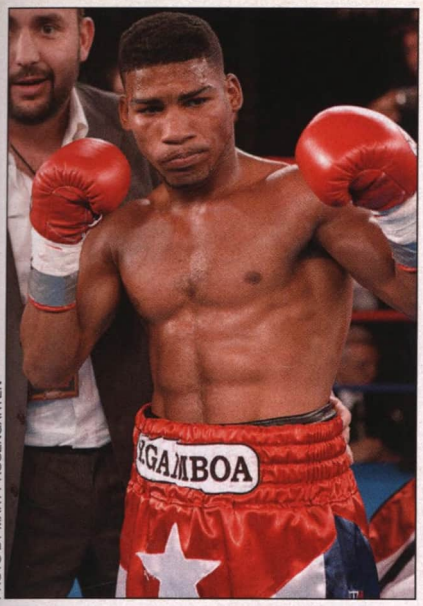


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Soon after Lopez dispatched Lontchi, Top Rank's Bob Arum was talking about a possible mega-showdown between Juanma and undefeated Cuban expatriate Yuriorkis Gamboa. Arum is looking to highlight the pair on an October card, building toward a headline fight in early-2010.

going for the quick strike. Prior to the April fight against rugged veteran Gerry Penalosa, Lopez had fought a combined eight rounds in his previous five fights. He was used to devouring his opposition.

That wasn't the case this time. Whereas Penalosa stuck around and absorbed punishment, Lontchi actually fought back, stinging Lopez with a few shots in the fifth. It was cause enough for Lopez' corner to remind their fighter that Lontchi was undefeated and wasn't about to lie down. Lopez lost the fifth round on all three judges' scorecards, a rarity over the last three years.

"I should have gone to the body more, breaking Lontchi down," Lopez said. "But I also thought the referee (Allan Huggins) could have done a better job of warning him not to use his head. Lontchi kept coming down at me with his head, and I kept telling the referee I was getting butted. The ref wasn't doing what he should have been doing. But I think I learned something: that I could cope with different things happening in the ring, because I was adjusting to a lot of things."

Lopez did adjust, and then resorted to being "Joe-Cool Juanma." After pinning Lontchi to the ropes in the eighth, Lopez gave a little wink to press row as if to say, *I have this under control, it's just a matter of time.*

"That's Juanma," said Rich Marotta, Fox Sports' ringside analyst who was calling the blow-by-blow on Latin Fury. "Juanma has the charisma to open up to a much larger audience."

Lopez even shoved Lontchi near the end of the first round, in an uncharacteristic show of temper. Juanma complained to Huggins about the butts. That was something unusual for Lopez. It even took Marotta by surprise.

"There were things I saw that I've never seen before from Juanma," Marotta said. "He did show some anger and different facial expressions that were new to me. But just as importantly, he kept his composure, showed patience, and stayed disciplined. That wasn't so easy against someone as awkward as Lontchi, who used his legs and flurried, not really hurting Juanma, but you could tell he was frustrating him."

Lopez floored Lontchi with a textbook right hook to the jaw in the second round and dropped Lontchi again in the ninth with a straight left. Lontchi had had enough by then and didn't come out for the 10th.

"I knew my power would eventually get to him," Lopez said. "Lontchi was tough to deal with, and I adjusted and moved on. What I take from this is that people believe in me, they believe I'm an elite fighter, and it's something I think too. He did some things I hadn't seen before and I dealt with it. I didn't like it, but it will help me become better."

The effort to market Juanma to the mainstream will continue with one more bout this year, and then an early-2010 PPV headlined by Lopez and Gamboa. What Top Rank is hoping for is that Lopez, who is so easily recognizable in Caguas, Puerto Rico, where Cotto also happens to live, gradually becomes more noticeable here to American fans. Lopez is working on bridging the language barrier, and understands English, though still doesn't feel comfortable speaking it in public.

Lopez, however, does possess a mastery of two universally understood languages—a big smile and a big punch—that could carry him to the greatness he yearns for the man in his mirror. ■

It's moments like this, when Lopez visited teenaged cancer patient Bryan Romero, that has made him a beloved figure in Puerto Rico. Now Arum's goal is for Juanma to conquer America with his charm and his punch.

ARTURO

Even In Death, There Was Nothing Black & White About Him

GATTI

By David Mayo

Arturo Gatti won the rubber match in his scintillating trilogy with Micky Ward but, in death, could do nothing to stop some semblance of his best-known rival evening the score. Just before Gatti was laid to rest in Montreal, nine days after his stunning and violent July 11 death in Brazil, Ward passed the casket of the legendary blood-and-guts warrior. Next to him was Carl Moretti, the longtime Main Events matchmaker who spent a decade of his professional life securing the right fights and developing favorable publicity for Gatti.

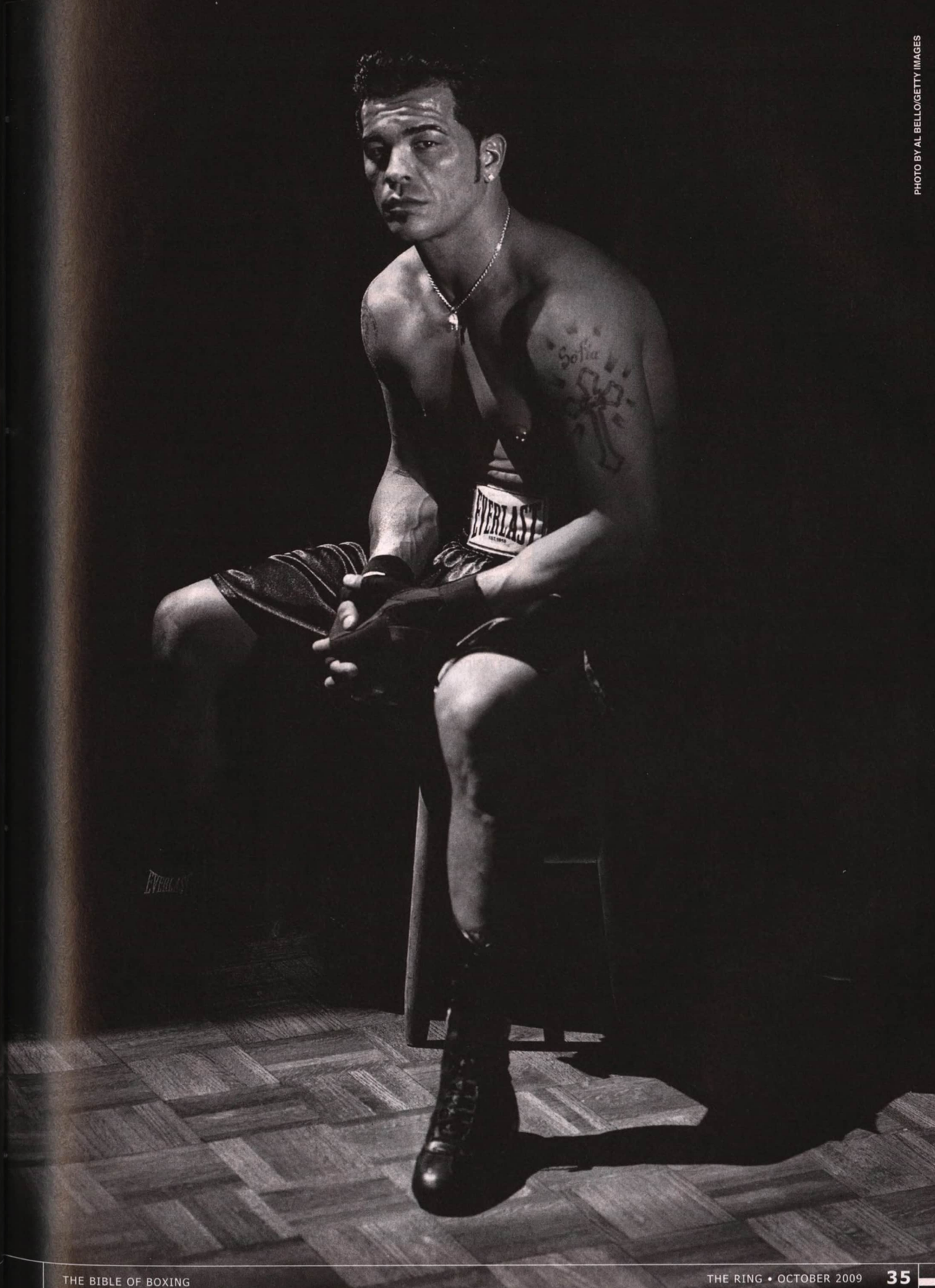


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY MIKE GLADYSZ/PRESSCHICAGO

Gatti and Amanda Rodrigues in a photo taken about a year before his death. At press time, Rodrigues was incarcerated in Brazil, but no formal charges had been lodged.

"When we lined up at the cemetery, at the mausoleum, when Micky walked past the casket, he tapped it with his fist, like he was throwing a punch one more time," Moretti recalled. "He turned to me, because I was right behind him, and said, 'I got him one more time.' And I said, 'Don't worry, he'll come back when he sees you next time.'"

Ward, after an emotional week including a wake, funeral, and the opening of shooting on the new film about his life, got a rare chuckle at the recollection.

"I guess I got the last punch in. He would've appreciated it," Ward said. "We did make history together. That was my dancing partner."

The questions surrounding Gatti's death were left largely unanswered at press time, almost two weeks after his passing.

Police in the Brazilian state of Pernambuco continued to hold Gatti's wife of just more than a year, Amanda Rodrigues, in connection with the strangulation death. After initially insisting there was no one else in the rented apartment where Gatti's body was discovered, and that Rodrigues therefore must have committed the offense during a crime of passion, which was allegedly achieved with her purse strap, police cooled their publicity machine after an autopsy was leaked, suggesting the asphyxiated corpse was suspended in air when investigators arrived.

Rodrigues had not been formally charged at press time. The leaked autopsy, which was not refuted by police, suggested the death could have happened via a variety of methods, including suicide by hanging.

Those closest to Gatti refused to consider the possibility that the fighting legend could have taken his own life.

"He was a good guy, he was doing business, building apartment complexes, building condos," Ward said. "He was a good businessman and things were going good. He had no reason to kill himself."

Gatti's manager, Pat Lynch, said he hopes Rodrigues "burns in hell" for what he insisted had to be a criminal act. Moretti said he hopes Rodrigues "gets convicted and gets to serve the rest of her life in prison—or gets the electric chair."

Nevertheless, Rodrigues remained held without formal charges, and presumption of innocence—along with a curious autopsy report that seemed to raise more questions than it answered—created an atmosphere in which suicide by the 37-year-old Gatti was a distinct possibility.

Friends and ex-foes alike rallied to celebrate Gatti's life, even as they were mired in various levels of grief. But the remembrances came with warnings too.

"I'd just tell all these athletes, all entertainers, to be careful about their girls," said Floyd Mayweather, who defeated Gatti in a one-sided 2005 fight.

Mayweather also said he was afraid to live with a woman, in the event he falls in love, for fear that something bizarre also could befall him.

"You never really know a person," he said.

The leaked autopsy report also created the possible illustration of Gatti as a person even those closest to him did not know, at least insofar as his potential for self-destruction at the point of absolute despair. Whether that was the case or not, only Gatti and Rodrigues might ever know for certain. Assuming the veracity of the leaked autopsy report, a suspended body and possibility of suicide potentially could be strong enough as exculpatory evidence to result in no charges ever being filed.

What is known is that Gatti and Rodrigues, who are parents to a baby boy, often were argumentative, to the point of legal intervention, well before the fatal event in the seaside resort of Porto de Galinhas, about 1,100 miles from Rio de Janeiro, on Brazil's northeastern coast.

Acelino Freitas, the Brazilian star who befriended Gatti in recent years, said in media reports that Gatti had told him about the couple's frequent arguments. Ward regularly stayed in contact with his ex-rival in the years since their 2002-'03 trilogy, golfing and partying together, visiting his training camps, and even participating in Gatti's ring walks. They spoke about twice a month by telephone and Ward said the news of ongoing disagreements between Gatti and Rodrigues came as no surprise.

"I guess they always fought, or whatever," Ward said. "Me, personally, I know they fought. But I never actually saw them go at it. You just hear things. I can't say, because I never saw it, but from what I understand, they would go at each other."

The arguments prompted Rodrigues to call Montreal police in April with a domestic violence complaint. Gatti did not appear to answer the complaint and was ordered to stay at least 200 feet away from his wife under terms of a restraining order. For the many who knew Gatti and are convinced he

would not kill himself, they believe he would be alive today if he had abided by those terms.

Lou DiBella worked closely with Gatti, first in his role as HBO's head of boxing programming and later as a promoter. With Gatti's death following the legendary Alexis Arguello's suicide by only 10 days, DiBella drew a comparison between the two that, he said, illustrated their differences far more than their similarities.

"There was a darkness to Arguello that was noticeable," DiBella said. "Even though Arturo liked fighting, liked partying, there was none of that dark side to him. He loved life; he loved his two young kids. It would've been the cowardly way out for him."

If a suicidal tendency raged within Gatti, it seemed to do so without the knowledge of those around him, even if controlled rage was his chosen profession. If that rage became uncontrolled in death, it might not have been the first time. On several occasions, Gatti committed or was alleged to have committed dangerous and violent acts, most of which were resolved before finding themselves into court, with the exception of a single drunk-driving conviction. He was arrested, but not convicted, for assaulting a police officer. A Florida man sued Gatti, claiming the fighter struck him over the head hard enough to dislodge his hair-implant staples. An exotic dancer claimed Gatti struck her for refusing sex, though she later recanted and there was no arrest.

Also, a link between repeated concussions and chronic depression was established last year in a study released by McGill University, in Gatti's hometown of Montreal. The study claimed that while about five percent of the general population suffers from depression, that number soars to as high as 40 percent among athletes who have suffered multiple concussions.

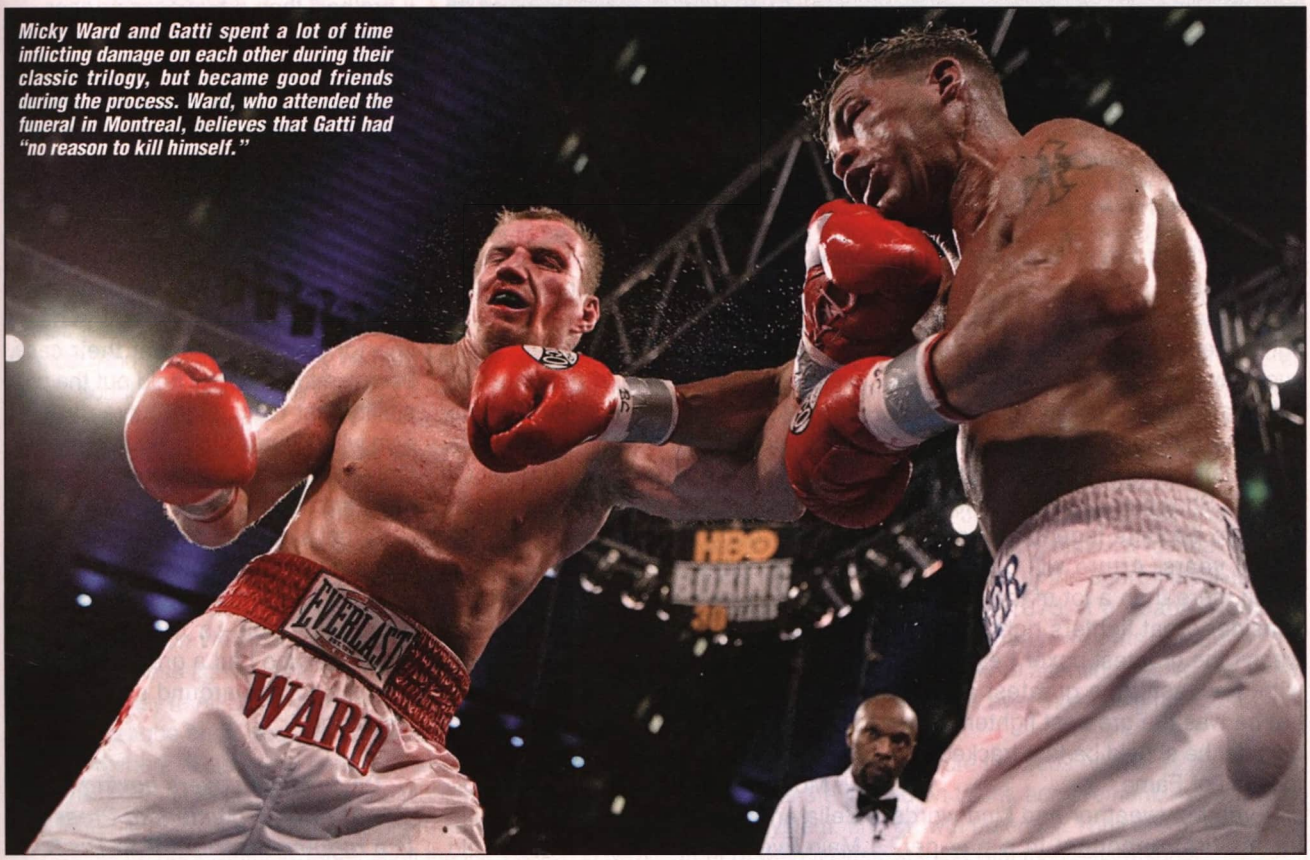
Those statistics struck those who knew Gatti as impertinent in the immediate aftermath of what they believed to be a criminal act, not a self-inflicted one. They chose to remember the good times, the fun-loving friend, and the great fights that made the former 130-pound and 140-pound title claimant unique in an era when his professional record of 40-9 (31) might otherwise be regarded as only slightly better than pedestrian.

Moretti remembered a moment when he was playing golf with Gatti and a miss-struck shot from another group underscored the fighter's quick wit.

"The ball went into the woods next to us and hit several trees," Moretti said. "When it made that 'Pop, pop, pop' noise, Arturo instinctively ducked, like there were gunshots going off. Then he jumped up and said, 'If I had ducked that way during my fights, I might have won a few more.' He was a funny guy and it just came to him so quickly."

DiBella recalled a moment after a memorable 1996 title defense against Wilson Rodriguez in New York, when Gatti was dating two women at the same time and each knew about the other.

"They were both in the dressing room, waiting for him after the fight, and when he comes in, he goes, 'Yo, Adrians!' It looked like a *Rocky* movie because he was beaten to a pulp, and he knew he looked like he'd been in a *Rocky* movie. That was the



Micky Ward and Gatti spent a lot of time inflicting damage on each other during their classic trilogy, but became good friends during the process. Ward, who attended the funeral in Montreal, believes that Gatti had "no reason to kill himself."

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

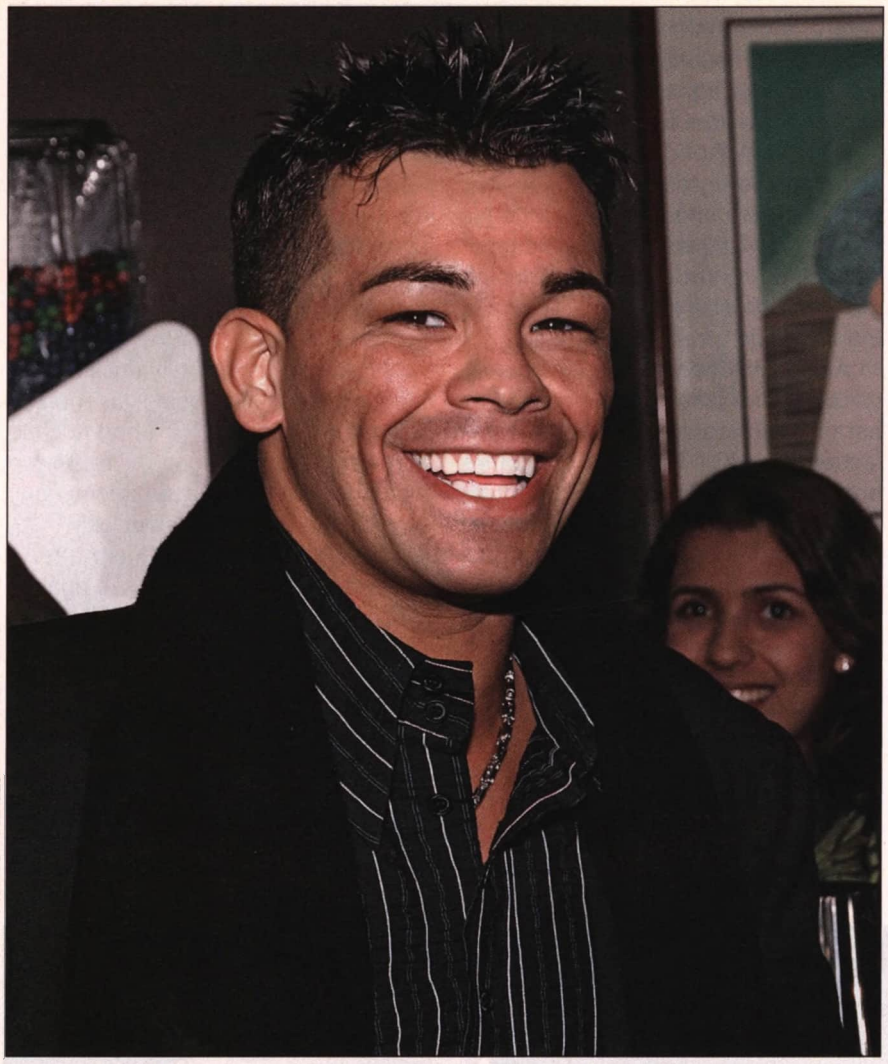


PHOTO BY SCOTT WINTROW/GETTY IMAGES

This is the smiling, happy-go-lucky Gatti that all of his friends, fans, and close associates remember, a man full of life, with a great sense of humor and a passion for boxing that made him one of the most popular fighters of his era, able to fill arenas, even after a loss.

funniest thing I ever saw in my life," DiBella said.

DiBella said he considered Gatti's fighting legacy akin to those created by such flawed-but-appreciated talents as Jake LaMotta or Rocky Graziano.

"When things are said and done, how many kids making millions on HBO or Showtime or pay-per-view are going to become legends?" he said. "In 20 years, Arturo will be remembered more than a lot of the guys we consider great fighters right now. He wasn't the greatest boxer I ever dealt with, he wasn't the greatest athlete, but he was the greatest fighter. In my opinion, he should be fast-tracked into the Hall of Fame."

Even Mayweather had kind words for his first opponent in a pay-per-view main event and his second opponent to die young, along with the late Diego Corrales.

"He was a throwback fighter," Mayweather said. "He could get knocked down four or five times, then come back and get you with one shot. Gatti was a warrior. We had a battle. Of course, it wasn't a competitive battle, but one thing I'll say about him, he wasn't a quitter. Gatti would fight anybody. He was a warrior who will truly be missed and he had a die-hard fan base. He's the only guy I know who could sell out an arena, lose, and they're going to be there to support him again."

Moretti, who later worked for DiBella and now is with Top Rank, said Main Events employees broke the old never-fall-in-love-with-your-fighter axiom en masse when it came to Gatti, a New Jersey favorite working under the umbrella of a New Jersey promoter, which made him "more like a friend or a brother" than a business partner.

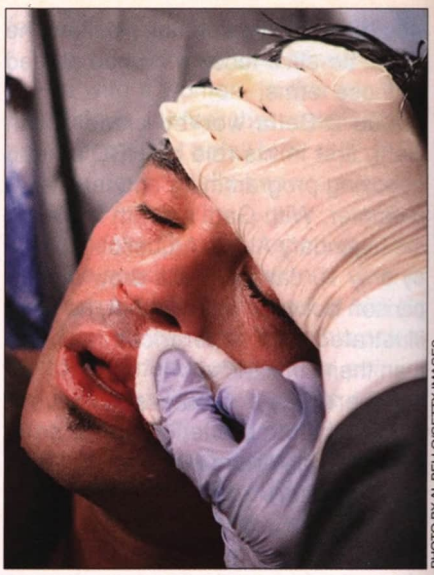


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Gatti is patched up following his kayo defeat at the hands of Alfonso Gomez in Gatti's final fight. Gatti was stopped five times and also absorbed much punishment in many of the bouts he won. The fact that repeated concussions can lead to depression could possibly be a factor if Gatti did indeed commit suicide.

"How he will be remembered depends on who you are," Moretti said. "But you say 'Gatti' and it just encompasses so much. I think people will remember him in a positive light."

Others will remember his demise first. They will remember the closed-casket funeral, to shield the unsightly death wounds. They will remember how prosecutors extended the deadline for police to present their case, because the autopsy held out the possibility that Gatti might have used his own wife's purse strap to hang himself. Only then will those people remember his great fights.

"What's done is done and you can't change what happened," Ward said. "But it's just unfortunate that we lost a great person—a friend, a father, someone who had a great heart. He's not going to be around anymore. It's just tough." ■

David Mayo covers boxing for the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press and is a regular contributor to THE RING.

The Ring All-Star Report Cards

Grading Boxing's Elite

By Don Stradley

If this year's All-Star Report Card has a recurring theme, it might be "Who would've thought?" For instance, who would've thought both Klitschko brothers would be on our list at the same time? Vitali appeared alone in 2005, while Wladimir appeared solo in 2007 and 2008. This year sees them together, a surprise since the oft-injured Vitali had been written off by most. And why shouldn't they be here? If German television ratings count for anything, the Brothers K might be the two biggest stars in boxing today.

Who would've thought Roy Jones would still be on the list? Or Bernard Hopkins? Or Shane Mosley? It's difficult to say if having so many of yesterday's stars on the list is a good thing or a bad thing. Maybe it means boxing hasn't yet replaced the old stars with new ones. That's bad. Or maybe the competition is so weak that these geezers can continue to hang around. That's bad too. On the other hand, it shows that boxing viewers still respect these fighters and want to see them. That's good. That's why they're All-Stars.

Joe Calzaghe and Oscar De La Hoya have retired, hence, they're nowhere to be found here. But who would've thought so many others from last year's group wouldn't make the cut? Sam Peter is gone, and judging by his recent performances, he may not be back. Antonio Tarver is off the list, based on two losses to Chad Dawson. Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. is gone, and he won't be considered again until he fights somebody of note. And who would've thought Antonio Margarito would be gone under such a cloak of infamy?

Who would've thought Kelly Pavlik would be ousted after making the list in 2007 and 2008? Some might wonder why Ricky Hatton stills rates a mention here, since he's suffered two devastating knockout losses while Pavlik has only lost once by decision. The answer is that, even after losing a pair of important fights, Hatton's following dwarfs Pavlik's.

And who would've thought we'd see two of the game's best little men on the list: Juan Manuel Lopez and Nonito Donaire. Their inclusion, and the entire list for that matter, reflects the continuing evolution of the sport. Had The Ring compiled a list of All-Stars in 1975, it probably would've kicked off with 10 American heavyweights. By 2009, the sport has shifted focus, with more attention paid to the lighter weights, as well as the sport's ever-increasing number of top-flight international fighters.

With that in mind, here are the 2009 All-Star Report Cards. The fighters are judged on talent, achievement, marketability, support system, and growth potential. They are presented in order of weight class, starting with the heavyweights.

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO

Heavyweight Champion

53-3 (47)

TALENT: Klitschko was once an overpowering heavyweight monster with a vulnerable chin. He apparently grew tired of sampling the canvas, for he's become an overly cautious fighter who works behind a high guard. He keeps opponents at a distance with a long jab, and shoots enough straight right hands to keep them wary. Even though he has reputation for being chinny, opponents rarely go on the attack, for along with being a 6'5" wall of muscle, Klitschko has created a defense that is nearly unbreakable. His concentration (i.e. fear of getting knocked out) is unflagging. He still stops opponents, but he does it gradually, breaking them down until they're weary from being bludgeoned. He has an excellent left hook, but his current stance and style doesn't allow him to take it out of wraps very often. Let other fighters take the risks; Wladimir will take the "W." **Grade: A-**

ACHIEVEMENT: Since he appeared on last year's All-Star grouping, Klitschko has scored kayo wins over Tony Thompson, Hasim Rahman, and Ruslan Chagaev. The win over Chagaev finally earned Klitschko THE RING belt. He also holds the IBF title, which he has defended seven times. Since a tough 2005 bout with Sam Peter that saw Klitschko on the canvas three times, he's had eight bouts and probably hasn't lost a single round. Klitschko may be a disappointment to some, but he has just about lived up to the potential we all imagined for him after winning an Olympic gold medal in 1996. He's the heavyweight champion, and it doesn't appear that anyone can beat him. **Grade: A-**

MARKETABILITY: Klitschko hasn't fought in Las Vegas since 2004. Since then, he has fought almost exclusively in Europe, and for good reason. There were approximately 61,000 people at the Veltins Arena in Germany to watch Klitschko fight Chagaev, and an astonishing 11 million viewers watching on German TV. Oscar De La Hoya never turned in such alarming numbers. But even if the American press has shown some begrudging respect for his current win streak, his careful style doesn't work well here. **Grade: A+ (in Europe) C+ (in USA)**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Wladimir has a solid relationship with trainer Emanuel Steward, and his brother, Vitali, is ultra-supportive. The Klitschko brothers' K2 Promotions has grown steadily, promoting Wlad's recent bouts. He's still managed by Bernd Boente, although Steward has a hand in helping choose his opponents. **Grade: A**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Wladimir versus a few more dull Russians could kill any remaining interest Americans have in the heavyweight division. Eddie Chambers and Alexander Povetkin may be in Wlad's future, but a bout with the U.K.'s David Haye would be the closest thing to a major heavyweight bout since the retirement of Lennox Lewis. **Grade: B+**

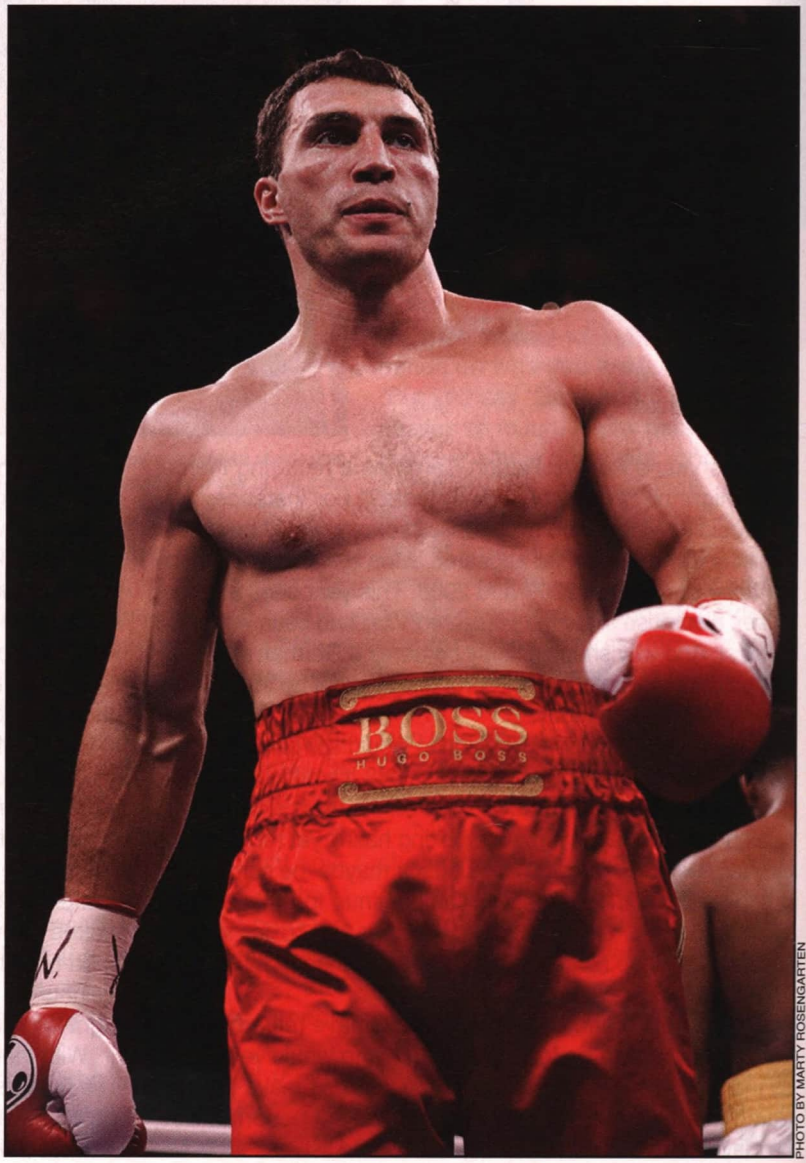


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

VITALI KLITSCHKO

WBC Heavyweight Titleholder

37-2 (36)

TALENT: He keeps his guard low, nailing opponents with deceptively fast counters. When he senses an opponent is hurt he is an excellent finisher. If you don't fall right away, he's patient enough to batter you for eight or 10 rounds. He has little interest in fighting at close quarters or hitting an opponent in the body, preferring to wear opponents down with headshots. He has decent power in both hands, and while he seems uncomfortable if you make him fight going backward, his chin is much better than Wladimir's and it's rare to see him hurt by a punch. At 6'7", 250 pounds, he may be one of the best big men in boxing history. **Grade: A**

ACHIEVEMENT: Klitschko won THE RING's vacant heavyweight championship by defeating Corrie Sanders in 2004, defending it once before his career went into a tailspin of injuries, retirement, political aspirations, and more injuries. He returned to boxing last year and won the WBC title by stopping Sam Peter, also earning THE RING's 2008 Comeback of the Year award. His only defeats have been a 10th round stoppage loss to Chris Byrd, when Klitschko retired on his stool with a shoulder injury, and a TKO loss to Lennox Lewis. Lewis cut him badly but Klitschko gained much admiration for his brave stand. Most recently, he stopped Juan Carlos Gomez in nine. **Grade: A**

MARKETABILITY: There was some novelty in "Dr. Ironfist," the fighting Ph.D., and he came very close to winning us over prior to his injury plagued years of 2005 through '07. It wouldn't take long for him to regain the interest of American fans, but not if he continues fighting duds in Europe. The fact that his return bouts have been aired on Showtime and ESPN Classic is telling, since he was once an HBO favorite. **Grade: B**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Veteran German trainer Fritz Sdunek, who has handled such fighters as Darius Michalczewski, Artur Grigorian, and Grigory Drozd, has a good chemistry with Vitali, and must consider him the best fighter he's ever trained. Emanuel Steward worked briefly with Vitali, but Sdunek remains the top trainer. Vitali co-promotes his own bouts under K2 Promotions, with brother Wladimir being a major source of support. K2 started out slowly, but as an ESPN.com report noted, the brothers have become quite shrewd. In negotiations for Wladimir's canceled bout with David Haye, K2 worked it so that if Haye were to win, K2 Promotions would promote Haye's next two fights, which would start with a rematch. Were Haye to beat Wladimir twice, his next opponent was to be Vitali. The crafty Klitschkos will do just fine as promoters. **Grade: A**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: He is 37, and with a history of physical problems, we don't see a lot in the elder Klitschko's future. He'll probably return to politics as soon as the old injuries start to flare up. In the meantime, an attractive match with Chris Arreola was close to being signed as this issue went to press. The bout would be held at the Staples Center in Los Angeles on September 26, the site of Vitali's blood-soaked slugfest with Lewis. **Grade: B+**

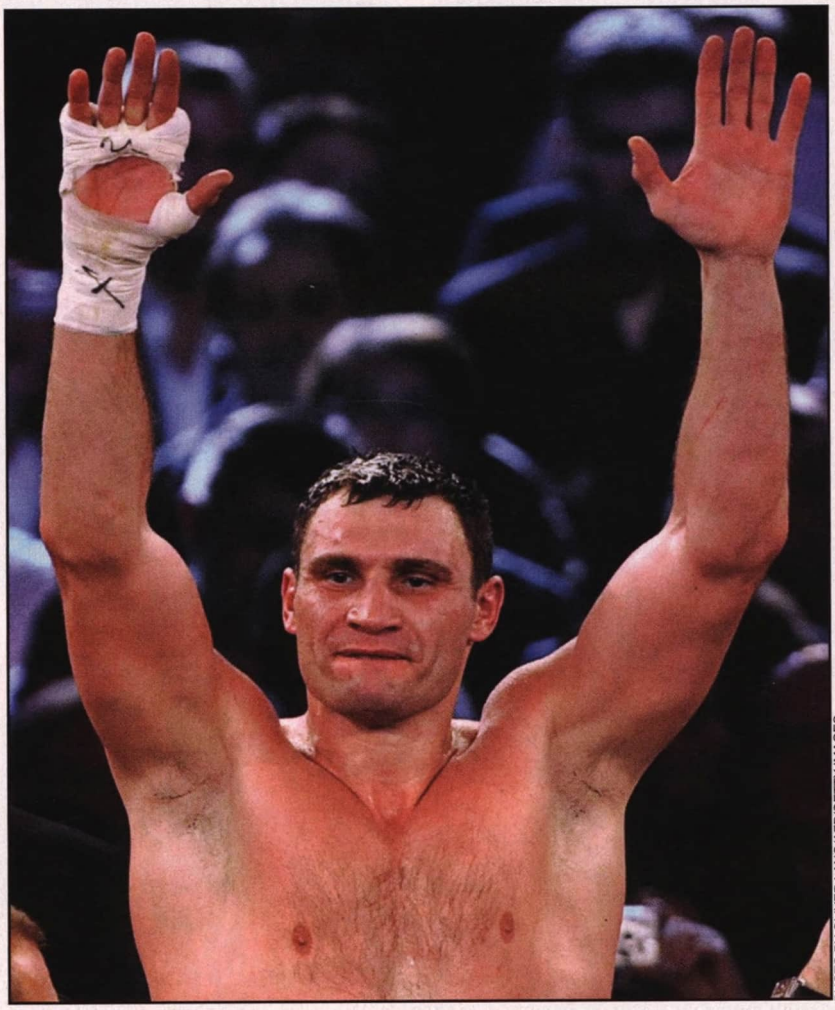


PHOTO BY OLIVER LANG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Wladimir Klitschko connects with a right en route to a seventh-round TKO of former heavyweight champion Hasim Rahman. The match took place in Mannheim, Germany, on December 13, 2008.

PHOTO BY THOMAS LOHNES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

DAVID HAYE

Heavyweight

22-1 (21)

TALENT: The "Hayemaker" fought only once since last year at this time, scoring a fifth-round TKO of journeyman Monte Barrett. Haye is a hit-and-be-hit fighter, usually getting rocked at least once before settling down and putting his opponent away. One of these days that open chin is going to cost him again, as it did in his only career loss, against Carl Thompson in 2004. The questions about Haye all stem from the Thompson bout, when Haye exhausted himself within a few rounds and was then kayoed. Questions of stamina and durability aside, he's very athletic and has been able to keep his career afloat with his bombing right hand and a cocky attitude. **Grade: A-**

ACHIEVEMENT: He was The Ring cruiserweight champion, and also won the WBA, WBC, and WBO belts at that weight. At cruiserweight he owns victories over some top men, including Jean-Marc Mormeck and Enzo Maccarinelli. Haye is still a relatively inexperienced pro with only 23 fights behind him, and his eagerness to score knockouts has at times made him look rather raw, but many feel he is one step away from becoming a major player. Haye was doing a great job of drumming up business for a bout with Wladimir Klitschko, but the bout was canceled when Haye injured his back in training. **Grade: A-**

MARKETABILITY: He'll be more marketable in the U.K. than America, but since he's a heavyweight with a slugging style, the American media may catch on. With Ricky Hatton on the verge of retirement and Joe Calzaghe gone, Haye could become the U.K.'s next big star. It doesn't hurt that he's a photogenic chap, having done some modeling work in the past. **Grade: B+**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Adam Booth plays the double role of trainer and manager, having guided Haye's career since his early days. Haye dabbles in promoting ("Haymaker Promotions"), while Golden Boy Promotions represents him in the U.S. Though Haye and Booth were heavily criticized for pulling out of fights with both Klitschko brothers, signing to fight Nicolay Valuev in Germany on November 7 could be a shrewd move. **Grade: A-**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: The heavyweight division needs Haye. Without him, we're looking at another few years of fat American heavies and dull Russian southpaws. A win over Valuev for the WBA title would immediately boost Haye's profile and lead to bigger fights. He's the kind of cocky character that grabs headlines. Unfortunately, it's hard to forget how undisciplined Haye can be. Still, fight fans of many decades ago had a lot of fun with another free-swinging braggart named Max Baer, so why not be optimistic about Haye? **Grade: A-**

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

TOMASZ ADAMEK

Cruiserweight Champion

38-1 (26)

TALENT: Adamek is a strong, businesslike fighter who wears opponents down with steady pressure, but at some point in almost every fight gets down to shear warfare. A former light heavyweight, Adamek has retained his power at cruiserweight, winning five of his seven cruiserweight bouts within the distance. Steve Cunningham survived to the final bell, but was sent to the canvas three times. Adamek's money punch is his right hand, usually thrown like he's trying to decapitate someone. Adamek's lone loss came in 2007 when he dropped a one-sided decision to light heavyweight Chad Dawson. Claiming he was weight-drained, Adamek has since moved up to cruiserweight and has not looked back. **Grade: A-**

ACHIEVEMENT: Adamek, 32, won 108 of 120 amateur bouts. He burst upon the professional scene in 2005 on the undercard of the Lamon Brewster-Andrew Golota bout in Chicago, winning a majority decision over Paul Briggs. That night saw the downfall of one Polish hero (Golota) and the rise of another (Adamek). The bout earned Adamek a vacant light heavyweight alphabet belt, and was a candidate for Fight of the Year. Adamek then stopped Thomas Ulrich and defeated Briggs a second time before losing to Dawson. At cruiserweight, Adamek started by defeating Luis Pineda, Josip Jalusic, O'Neil Bell, and Gary Gomez. Since beating Cunningham for the cruiserweight championship, Adamek has stopped Johnathon Banks and Bobby Gunn. **Grade: B**

MARKETABILITY: Adamek has stirred up the Polish-American audience. Originally from Zywiek, he's only the third Polish fighter recognized as a boxing titleholder. His last three bouts have taken place in the heavily Polish populated Newark, New Jersey, just minutes from Jersey City, where he now resides with his family. He's a perfect example of boxing's recent, "Back to the people," movement, where local favorites are showcased on their home turf, rather than being shuttled off to Las Vegas to fight in half empty casinos. His no-nonsense personality compliments his rugged fighting style. **Grade: A-**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Trainer Andrzej Gmitruk has been with Adamek since 1999; Adamek refers to him as a second father. Ziggy Rozalski, who managed Golota, does Adamek's negotiating and also owns the Jersey City gym where Adamek trains. Don King promoted Adamek's early American bouts, but Adamek is now promoted by Main Events. The Prudential Center in Newark treats Adamek as a star attraction. **Grade: A-**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Old rival Cunningham won on the undercard of the Joseph Agbeko-Vic Darchinyan feature, making a rematch likely, but Adamek was probably hoping for bigger things. Unfortunately, when Golden Boy Promotions approached Adamek as an opponent for Bernard Hopkins, the Adamek camp balked at GBP's low-money offer. More bad news: Neither HBO nor Showtime was interested in a summer bout featuring Adamek, which included a proposed match with Glen Johnson. Adamek ended up fighting on Main Events' website. Since Adamek doesn't have a riveting backstory to make marketing easy for the cable giants, he may struggle to be noticed beyond Newark. Adamek's camp tried to sell a Cunningham rematch to HBO or Showtime, but the cable giants weren't interested. **Grade: B**

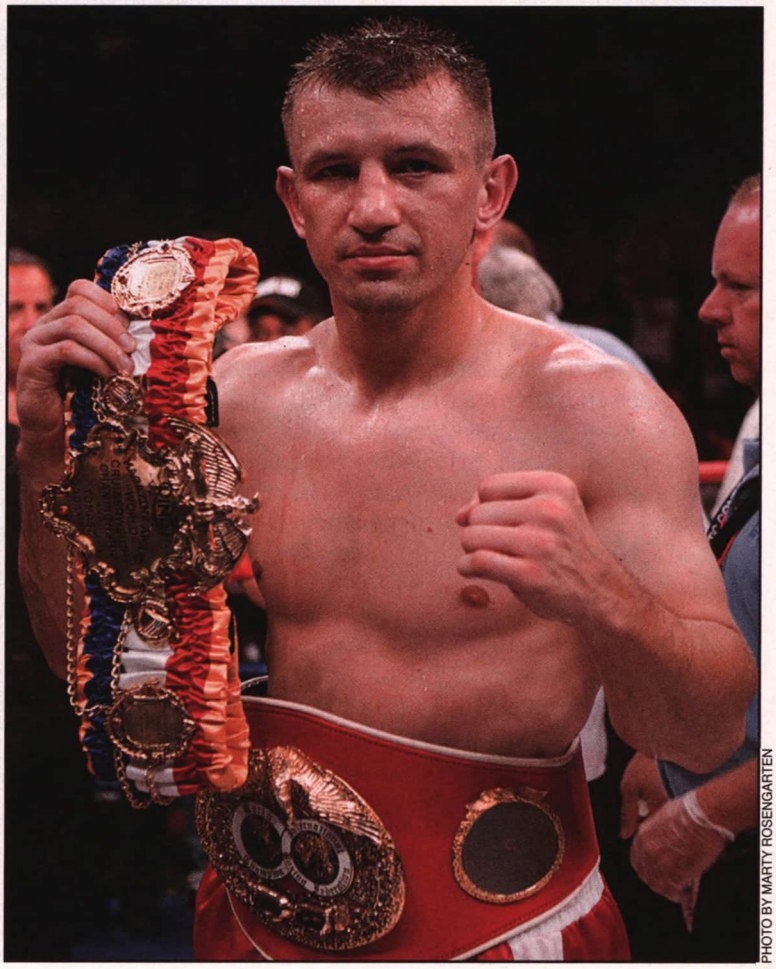


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

BERNARD HOPKINS

Light Heavyweight

49-5-1 (32)

TALENT: Hopkins' brain is like a museum of boxing knowledge, and his physical attributes, even at age 44, are holding up. He is a master of foot positioning, defense, pacing, and is brilliant at taking away an opponent's best weapon. He's a wily in-fighter, and while he's no kayo artist, he still has enough pop in his gloves to hurt opponents. Hopkins' right hand is one of the most versatile in boxing. He can counter with it, work inside with it, score points with it, or rattle your teeth with it. He is especially handy against fighters who rely on one particular punch such as Felix Trinidad and Kelly Pavlik; he took away Trinidad's hook and stymied Pavlik's right hand, rendering both fighters useless. Hopkins has more trouble with quick, two-handed fighters such as Joe Calzaghe and Jermain Taylor, both of whom scored close points wins over B-Hop. **Grade: A**

ACHIEVEMENT: Hopkins made 20 title defenses at middleweight, yet he may be remembered most for what he did after losing the championship to Taylor. Defeating Antonio Tarver, Winky Wright, and Pavlik, along with a narrow decision loss to Calzaghe that saw Hopkins drop the Welshman in the opening round, has made Hopkins everyone's favorite old-timer. Last year's win over Pavlik was a pure boxing clinic. He's a legend. **Grade: A+**

MARKETABILITY: The ex-con who rose to become a revered champion and millionaire should be marketable, but there's a limit. Part of this is his own doing, for he spent many years cultivating the image of prison badass. Still, he has done good work as a studio analyst on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fight* series, and with more experience he could succeed in broadcasting. **Grade: B+**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Hopkins is still with Golden Boy Promotions, which is a surprise to some, since he used to go through promoters like they were toothpicks. Hopkins and GBP have a comfortable arrangement; he's a partner and helps out with promoting their bouts. Nazim Richardson, after being away for two bouts for health reasons, returned as Hopkins' trainer for the Pavlik bout. Richardson and B-Hop have an old-school understanding of the sport, and they enjoy working on strategies to pick opponents apart. Hopkins is self-managed. **Grade: A**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Because of his age and his tendency to fight infrequently, we can't say the sky is the limit. While everyone from Chad Dawson to Tomasz Adamek has been mentioned as a possible opponent, many believe Hopkins will seek out a soft touch to stage a farewell retirement bout. By the time this issue hits the stands, an announcement may have been made, for Hopkins and GBP were working in secret at press time. **Grade: B**

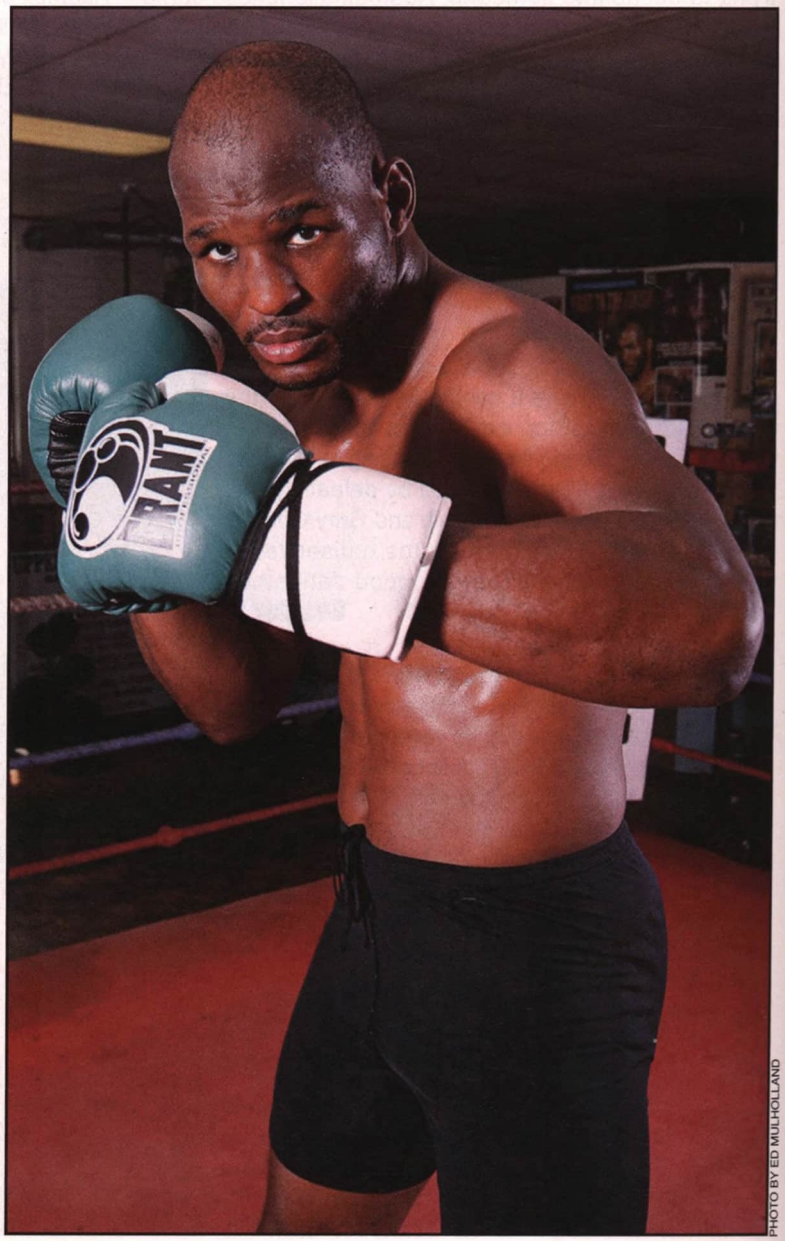


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

ROY JONES

Light Heavyweight

53-5 (39)

TALENT: He no longer leaps across the ring like a coyote taking down a neighborhood cat, but he has a few tricks left, namely a quick right hand and the ability to look flashy in spurts. Otherwise, 40-year-old Jones does a lot of leaning on the ropes, gyrating his hips, and playing to the audience. He's content to clown, where he used to dazzle. He can still be a dangerous bodypuncher, though, and some opponents may still be daunted by his reputation. At this time in his life he's not good enough to beat the A-list talents, and maybe not even the B-listers. But the rest are fair game. **Grade: B**

ACHIEVEMENT: During the last year Jones dropped a one-sided decision to Joe Calzaghe and then took target practice on a shopworn Omar Sheika, stopping him in five. Jones' golden era was the 1990s, when he won numerous alphabet belts and defeated such stars as Bernard Hopkins, James Toney, Virgil Hill, and Vinny Paz. Jones spent a few uninspired years beating light heavyweights and collecting more belts, and then he won a heavyweight title by beating John Ruiz. After a crushing series of losses (by knockout and decision to Antonio Tarver, and by knockout to Glen Johnson), he has gradually rebuilt his career. The highlights of this second act have been wins over undefeated Anthony Hanshaw and a faded Felix Trinidad. At this point in time, Jones seems to be fighting for the fun of it. Maybe after so many years of being "Superman," he enjoys life as a mere mortal. **Grade: A**

MARKETABILITY: Jones has taken to promoting himself—several of his recent bouts were promoted under his Square Ring banner, and the Sheika debacle, a weird card combining boxing with MMA action, was done under Roy Jones Promotions. But Jones is only as marketable as his opponent. His bout with Trinidad did surprisingly well on pay-per-view, and if he can dig up another famous old pug, he can probably score again. The Calzaghe and Sheika bouts were less successful, but Calzaghe and Sheika didn't have Trinidad-like followings. **Grade: B**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Alton Merkerson is still Jones' chief trainer, and in recent months Roy has reconnected with his father. The on-and-off relationship of Junior and Senior was part of the Jones' mythology, but the fact that they're back on speaking terms could be part of the reason Jones continues to fight. **Grade: A-**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Jeff Lacy is next for Jones. Beyond their scheduled August bout, Jones has mentioned Australia's Danny Green as a future opponent. There are probably no major bouts left for Jones, but don't be surprised if he calls on Tarver for a fourth time, since Tarver looks to be about as faded as Jones. **Grade: B-**

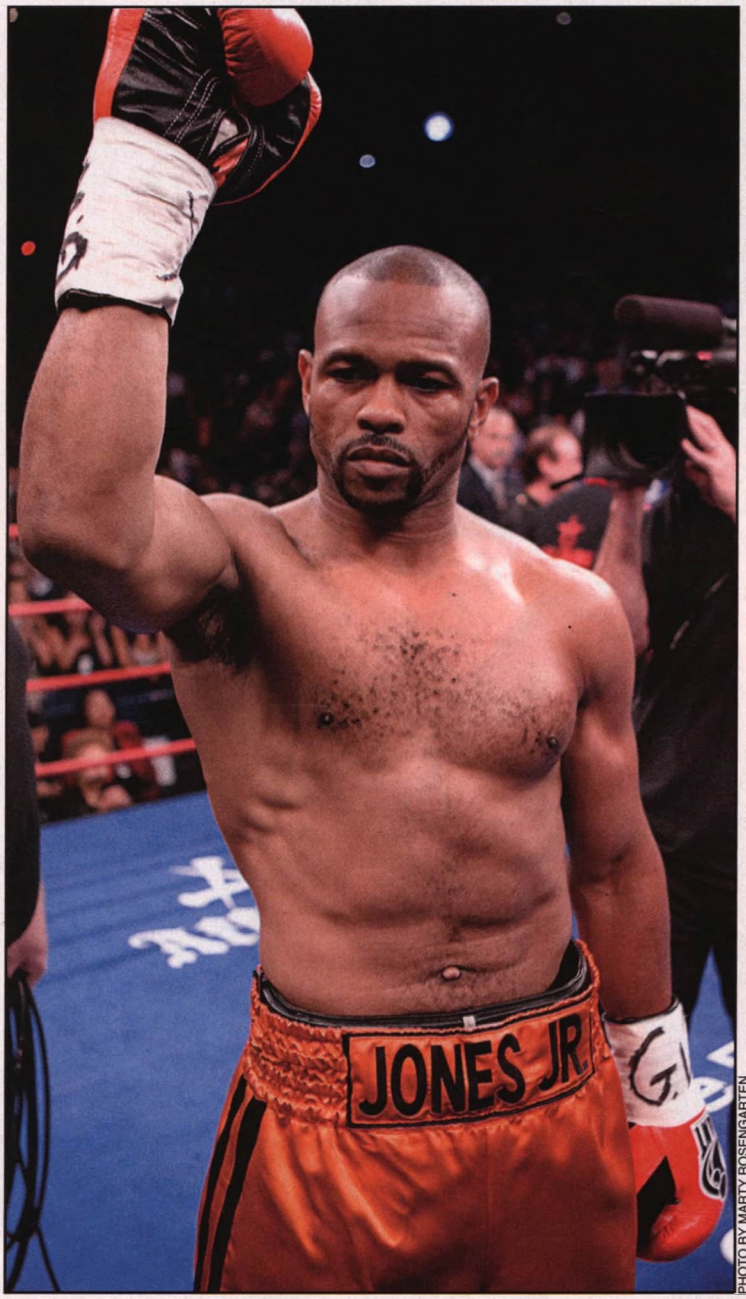


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Lucian Bute slams a left into the head of Fulgencio Zuniga during his fourth successful defense of the IBF super middleweight belt. Bute stopped the Colombian in the fourth round of a September 13, 2009, bout in Montreal, Quebec.

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

LUCIAN BUTE

IBF Super Middleweight Titleholder

24-0 (19)

TALENT: Bute is a talented boxer with quick hands and decent power. His best punch is a straight left cross, and he's astute at using his footwork to keep opponents off-balance. He can brawl a little bit, but Bute's forte is boxing and moving, mixing in enough combinations to keep the fight entertaining. He's also become an accomplished bodypuncher, shown in his most recent bout when he dropped Fulgencio Zuniga with a crippling left hook to the gut. He dismisses the questions about his chin that were raised after he was nearly kayoed by Librado Andrade, saying he was merely tired. **Grade: B+**

ACHIEVEMENT: He nearly blew it all last year during the final seconds of the Andrade bout. Far ahead on points, Bute found himself on the canvas and nearly knocked out. He finished the fight on his feet, winning by unanimous decision, but was fortunate that Andrade ran out of time to finish him. Regardless, Bute looked better in his next bout, a fourth-round stoppage of Zuniga. Prior to these bouts, Bute had been thrilling Montreal fans by beating the likes of William Joppy, Sakio Bika, and Dingaan Thobela. Bute won the IBF super middleweight title in 2007 by beating Alejandro Berrio at Montreal's Bell Centre, where Bute has fought 16 times. He has fought a quartet of bouts outside of Canada, including a return to his birth town of Galati, Romania, where he stopped Donny McCrary in four rounds in 2005. **Grade: B**

MARKETABILITY: Bute is enormously popular in Montreal, drawing around 16,000 for the Andrade fight. The key has been his embracing of the French-Canadian culture, going so far as to learn the French language after moving to Montreal in 2003, and helping to run a summer camp for troubled children. His last two bouts have been on Showtime's *ShoBox: The New Generation*, but his next bout, a rematch with Andrade, will be on HBO and is being promoted by Andrade's promoter, Golden Boy. Regardless, Bute must show he can beat Andrade without coming apart at the end. **Grade: B+**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: In May 2008 he signed a long-term contract with Quebec based Interbox, a company headed by former Canadian fighter Eric Lucas. The Lucas connection continues with Bute's trainer, Stephane Larouche, who once trained Lucas. Larouche is credited with turning the formerly free-swinging Bute into a more complete, polished fighter. **Grade: A-**

GROWTH OPPORTUNITY: With the 168-pound class looking for a leader post Calzaghe, 29-year-old Bute seemed to be in a good position, but when Showtime recently proposed a lengthy tournament of super middleweights, Bute's handlers kept him out of the race. According to ESPN.com, Showtime may have locked up the best of the division. If so, Bute may spend a year or two idling as a Montreal phenomenon with no major opponents. **Grade: A-**

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PAUL WILLIAMS

Middleweight/Junior Middleweight

37-1 (27)

TALENT: Williams has the height, reach, and southpaw stance to handle just about anybody. Add to that his busy style, which features a high volume of punches thrown from all angles, and you have a nearly perfect offensive machine. There are drawbacks, though, including bouts where he has faltered in late rounds. He can also dominate opponents to the point where it all becomes a bit dull. We may expect too much from him because of his size, so when he's not spectacular we quickly dismiss him as overrated. That's the downside of being a young man with such outsized skills. **Grade: A-**

ACHIEVEMENT: At 27, he's a young veteran, already boasting a nine-year professional career. After humble beginnings in out-of-the-way rings in Georgia and South Carolina, he scored significant wins over Walter Matthysse, Sharmba Mitchell, and Antonio Margarito. Beating Margarito earned him the WBO welterweight title, which he promptly lost in his first defense to Carlos Quintana. A rematch saw Williams regain the belt by stopping Quintana in one round. Vacating the title to try his luck at junior middleweight, he kayoed Andy Kolle in one and stopped ex-titlist Verno Phillips in eight rounds. Most recently, Williams outpointed veteran Winky Wright. He's dripping with potential. **Grade: B**

MARKETABILITY: Promoter Dan Goossen is scouring the world for fighters willing to face this 6'1" junior middleweight, but there aren't many takers. On top of that, Williams' low-key persona doesn't exactly set our TV screens on fire. But he already has a cult following, and that's a good start. **Grade: B-**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Much of Williams' success is due to trainer/manager George Peterson. They've been together since the beginning of the fighter's career, and Peterson likes to hail Williams as the next Sugar Ray Leonard. It sounds a bit silly, but that's the kind of support a fighter needs. Some wonder if Williams would accomplish more under another promotional group, but Goossen believes in his product and will do his best for Williams. **Grade: B+**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Williams is in the same position Wright was a few years ago, that of the difficult southpaw no one wants to fight. WBO junior middleweight titleholder Sergei Dzinziruk has been mentioned as a possible opponent for the fall, but a far more attractive match with middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik was being seriously considered as this issue went to press. Goossen has even suggested Williams climb all the way up to 175. Still, having so many options may be more of a curse than a blessing, because it doesn't allow Williams to focus. **Grade: B**

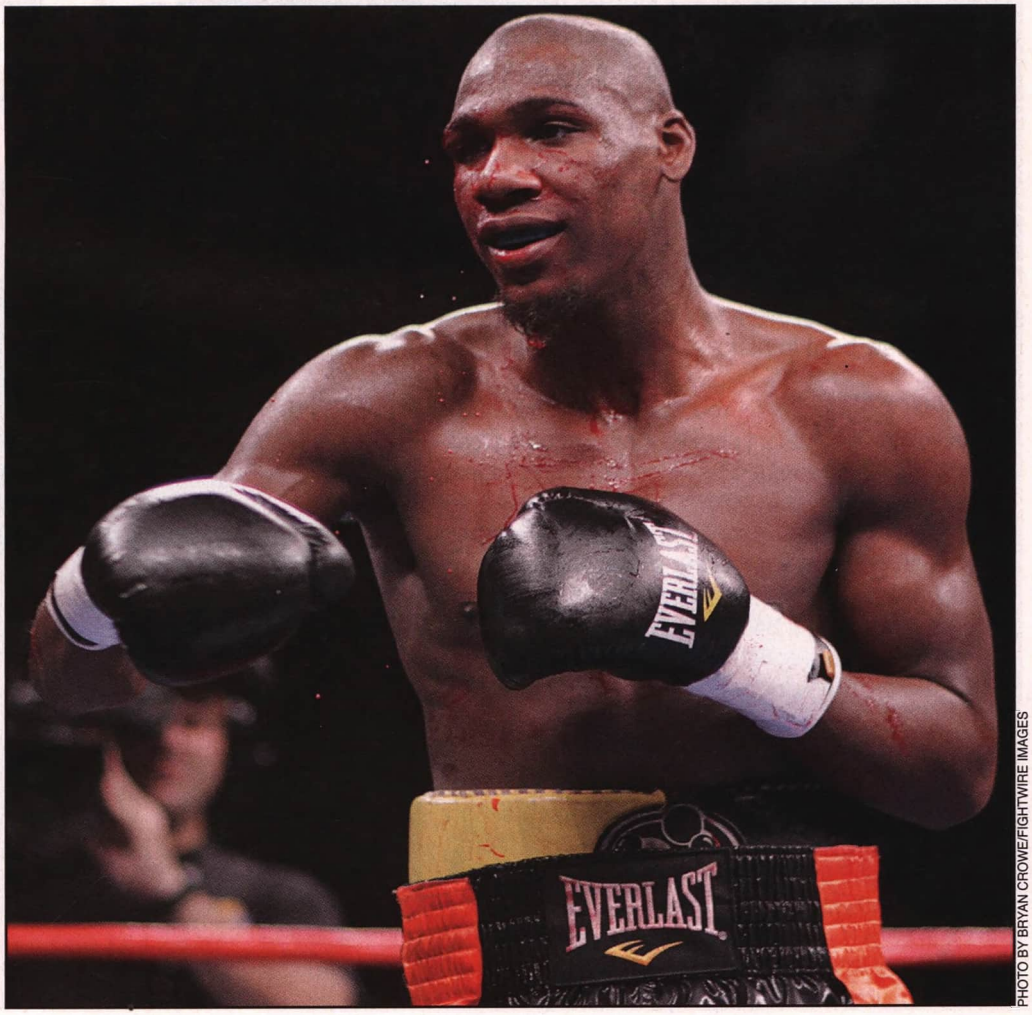


PHOTO BY BRYAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

FLOYD MAYWEATHER

Welterweight

39-0 (25)

TALENT: Mayweather is one of those rare athletes blessed with great reflexes, a keen mind, and the discipline necessary to remain on top. He's such a brilliant defensive artist that we tend to forget he occasionally steps forward and tears an opponent apart. He's an excellent counterpuncher, particularly with his right hand, and can also crack with his left hook. He has occasionally been hindered by brittle hands, and has mentioned problems with his shoulders and upper back. If Mayweather has a flaw, it's that he occasionally gets bored with his work and, in turn, bores us. **Grade: A**

ACHIEVEMENT: After laying low for more than a year, Mayweather came out of "retirement" in May to announce a bout with Juan Manuel Marquez. A fair amount of hype ensued, only to see Mayweather pull out with a rib injury. It may not seem like enough to get him on our All-Star list, but the fact that so much interest was generated indicates Mayweather is almost as big a star as he thinks he is. His career is marked by wins over Diego Corrales, Jose Luis Castillo (twice), Arturo Gatti, Zab Judah, Oscar De La Hoya, and Ricky Hatton. Along the way he's won a plethora of alphabet belts from junior lightweight to junior middleweight, and THE RING championships at lightweight and welterweight. Thanks largely to the popularity of De La Hoya, Mayweather was part of the most watched pay-per-view bout in history. **Grade: A**

MARKETABILITY: You wouldn't think a dullish fighter with an unpleasant personality would be a crossover star, but Mayweather has done well in this regard, especially for this era in boxing history. While he's not exactly in George Foreman's league, he's appeared on various TV shows, wrestling events, and TV commercials. Also, it was Mayweather's brash attitude that helped launch HBO's 24/7 as the most interesting new way to promote major fights. His fling with "crossover" stardom is probably done, though. **Grade: A-**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Advisers Al Hayman and Leonard Ellerbe are nearly as cocky as Floyd, as is uncle/trainer Roger. Perhaps they have a right to be cocky, since they're handling an undefeated, future Hall of Famer. Floyd has been plagued by financial problems as of late, but even that will play into his behalf, for Mayweather loves drama the way Popeye loves spinach. Floyd has also started his own promotional company, but owing the IRS $6-million, as reported by The Associated Press, is not a good way to start. **Grade: A-**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Provided he defeats Marquez, the winner of Cotto-Pacquiao awaits. A bout with Shane Mosley would also be major. Unfortunately, Mayweather usually ignores the desires of boxing fans, and we can't expect much from him if he's only fighting once every two years. Mayweather, who occasionally mentions his loss of enthusiasm for the sport, may have peaked. **Grade: A-**

PHOTO BY JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES

SHANE MOSLEY

WBA Welterweight Titleholder

46-5 (39)

TALENT: Mosley is a smart boxer-puncher with a keen mind for the ring. He has good power in both hands, speedy combinations, agile legs, a solid defense, and he's durable. Mosley's left hook is one of the best in boxing, and he can wing a right hand like he's in an alley brawl. He's also a first-class bodypuncher, he can be effective fighting inside, or he can fight on his toes. He had trouble with Vernon Forrest and Winky Wright, going 0-4 against them, but they were taller men with awkward styles. Mosley's lone flaw is that he occasionally turns in an ordinary, workmanlike performance. Still, he has an uncanny ability to come back after being written off. **Grade: A**

ACHIEVEMENT: He's had an exceptional career, including a 1997-1999 run as the IBF lightweight boss, winning the belt from Philip Holiday and making eight defenses. His victims included John-John Molina and Jesse James Leija. He defeated Oscar De La Hoya for the WBC welterweight belt and defended that title three times. A second win over De La Hoya earned Mosley the world junior middleweight championship, as well as the WBC and IBF 154-pound straps, all of which he lost on his first defense, to Wright. After losing a rematch to Wright, he has bounced around between 154 and 147, beating Fernando Vargas twice by knockout, and then losing to Cotto on points. Since the loss to Cotto, he kayoed Ricardo Mayorga in 12 and then annihilated Margarito in nine. At age 37, Mosley's back at the top of the welterweight class. **Grade: A**

MARKETABILITY: The feeling around boxing is that Mosley is a great fighter without a great following. Since beating Margarito he's been loudly calling for Manny Pacquiao or Floyd Mayweather, and while those bouts may come at some point, he lacks the blockbuster appeal that makes promoters push him to the front of the line. Actually, Sugar Shane could very well be more popular than the dealmakers think, but longstanding perceptions are hard to shake. **Grade: B+**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Mosley and his wife/manager Jin recently divorced. Adding to that, the ongoing court battle with Balco President Victor Conte, whom Mosley is now suing for defamation, may be distracting for many more months. On the plus side, Mosley has settled on trainer Naazim Richardson after a list of trainers that includes his father, Joe Goossen, and John David Jackson. Mosley is promoted by Golden Boy Promotions and is a partner in the group. Mosley now manages himself, with his father Jack Mosley and GBP's Richard Schaefer acting as advisers. **Grade: A-**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: According to Schaefer, Mosley has shelved his campaign to get a fight with Pacquiao. Nonetheless, HBO has expressed interest in Mosley's next bout, whether it's a major one or not. Andre Berto would be perfect, and Joshua Clottey would also be interesting. **Grade: B**

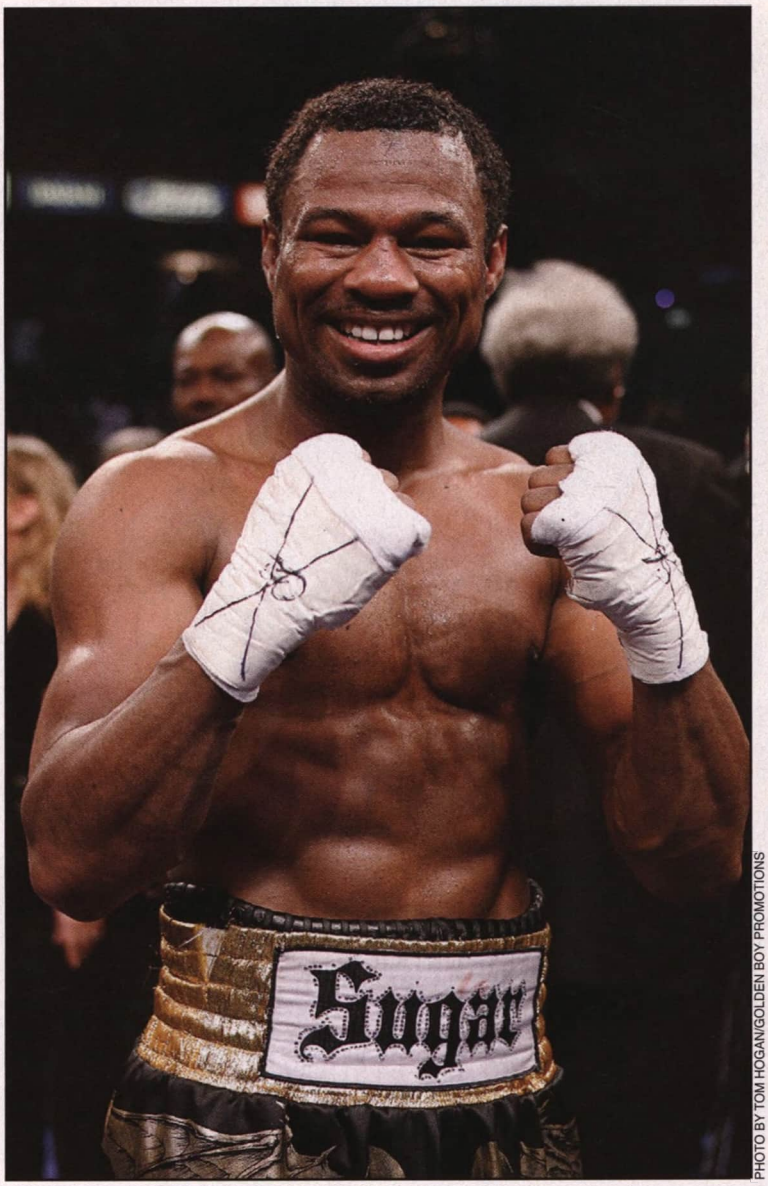


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Antonio Margarito absorbs Shane Mosley's left jab flush on the mouth during their January 24, 2009, fight at Los Angeles' Staples Center, which ended in a ninth-round TKO victory for Sugar Shane.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

MIGUEL COTTO

Welterweight

34-1 (27)

TALENT: Cotto is no longer the unstoppable robot of a few years ago, but that may be because he's no longer fighting the likes of Paulie Malignaggi or Zab Judah. He's been fighting bigger, better fighters like Shane Mosley, Antonio Margarito, and Joshua Clottey. They stand up under Cotto's pressure, and he's had to dig deeper. He's showing signs of wear, which is to be expected after so many tough fights, but he still has enough left to contend with any fighter put in front of him. His arsenal includes severe hooks to the body, relentless combinations, and faster hands than he's given credit for having. He's also become an increasingly mobile fighter, using his legs to get him out of range and soak up precious seconds in the later rounds. Cotto's always in top condition, and despite appearing to quit against Margarito, he's known for his toughness. Against Clottey, he survived a nasty cut and triumphed by a split decision. **Grade: A-**

ACHIEVEMENT: As Cotto approaches 29, he can already look back on a great career that included terms as WBO junior welterweight titlist (six defenses) and WBA welterweight titlist (five defenses). The lone setback on his record, a TKO loss to Margarito, is questionable now that Margarito was caught trying to load his gloves against Mosley. Cotto currently wears the WBO welterweight belt, which was given to him after he defeated Michael Jennings last February. Cotto hasn't quite reached the level of stardom that many predicted, but he is not far from it. **Grade: A-**

MARKETABILITY: Cotto is Puerto Rico's favorite fighter these days. He's helped himself by improving his English, and his personality has opened up. He has a sizable following on the East Coast, and has been a reliable presence in Las Vegas. He's never been a pay-per-view attraction, but his upcoming bout with Manny Pacquiao will be huge. **Grade: B+**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: The tension in the Cotto camp involving his uncle Evangelista finally reached the boiling point this year. After an ugly altercation that climaxed with Evangelista allegedly throwing a cement block through the windshield of Cotto's car, Evangelista was fired and replaced by his assistant, Joe Santiago. Cotto has recently changed his training base from Puerto Rico to Florida, and remains a key fighter at Top Rank. **Grade: B**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Should he beat Pacquiao in their November 14 blockbuster at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, it would elevate Cotto to the highest plateau. But even a loss to Pacquiao wouldn't totally ruin his future, for many fans would like to see Cotto get a chance for revenge against Margarito. Top Rank boss Bob Arum knows that bout has potential, and he'll find a way to make it happen, regardless of what happens with Cotto-Pacquiao. **Grade: A-**

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

MANNY PACQUIAO

Junior Welterweight Champion

49-3-2 (37)

TALENT: The Pacquiao of 2009 is a vastly different animal than the Pacquiao of just a few years ago. When he was first on the All-Star Report Card, he was a hard-charging fighter, relying almost exclusively on his sledgehammer left. Now, he's one of the most complete fighters in the business, with a rapier right jab, a strong right hook, and some of the most nimble footwork around. His defense has improved to the point where his last three opponents—David Diaz, Oscar De La Hoya, and Ricky Hatton—laid barely a glove on him. Oh, yeah, the left hand is still a sledgehammer. Along with his improved skills, Pacquiao has a desire to win that is unparalleled in the sport. **Grade: A**

ACHIEVEMENT: Pacquiao is currently recognized as THE RING's junior welterweight champion, and he sits atop THE RING's pound-for-pound list. He's twice won THE RING's Fighter of the Year award (2006, 2008), and briefly wore THE RING's featherweight and junior lightweight titles. He's also won alphabet titles at flyweight, junior featherweight, and lightweight. Wins over such stars as De La Hoya, Hatton, Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales, and Juan Manuel Marquez, plus the unbelievable fame he has in the Philippines, guarantees him a spot in the International Boxing Hall of Fame exactly five years to the second he retires. When you consider that a boy who used to sleep on the streets has achieved all of this, we have to grade him an A+ because there's no higher grade. **Grade: A+**

MARKETABILITY: Along with being an iconic figure in the Philippines, Pacquiao has been embraced in America as perhaps the most popular international fighter since the prime days of Roberto Duran. He has improved his English to a remarkable degree, which has allowed us a glimpse of his humble, yet humorous, personality. **Grade: A+**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Trainer Freddie Roach has worked with Pacquiao since 2000, and they've become one of the great boxer/trainer packages in history. Although Pacquiao's brain trust includes attorney Franklin "Jeng" Gakal and adviser Michael Koncz, Roach also acts as a manager-mouthpiece, drumming up business the old-fashioned way, and getting under the skin of opponents with playful banter. Pacquiao's promoted by Top Rank, with Golden Boy Promotions still retaining a financial interest in all of Pacquiao's fights. He's also mentioned another political run in 2010, which may cause a distraction. **Grade: A-**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: At 30, Pacquiao is at the mountaintop, but there's plenty for him to do, starting with Miguel Cotto in November. Shane Mosley wants a chance at "Pac-Man," and a third bout with Marquez would be fascinating as well. What fans are really hoping for is a bout with Floyd Mayweather. Roach has suggested Pacquiao will only fight a few more times, so only the elite are on his radar. **Grade: A**

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Manny Pacquiao tears into Ricky Hatton on his way to a second-round knockout victory and the world 140-pound championship. Pac-Man's spectacular kayo took place on May 2, 2009, at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

RICKY HATTON

Junior Welterweight

45-2 (32)

TALENT: Since last year's list, Hatton stopped Paulie Malignaggi in 11 rounds, and then suffered a devastating second-round knockout loss to Manny Pacquiao. Throughout his career he's been a mauling type of fighter who enjoys an inside battle, but there have been occasional flashes of technique that suggest he could be a more well-rounded fighter if he could focus. At his best, he's a hardnosed mauler with a good left hook and a damaging body attack. At his worst, he falls into clinches far too often, and puts fans to sleep with extensive holding. Against Pacquiao he reverted to his old habit of charging headfirst into the fray, and he paid for it. He's been kayoed twice, which increases the likelihood of his being kayoed again before he retires. **Grade: B**

ACHIEVEMENT: Great Britain's most beloved fighter, Hatton has appeared in two high-profile pay-per-view bouts with large, international audiences, and was THE RING's Fighter of the Year for 2005. Unfortunately, he no longer has the distinction of being undefeated at 140, and may be remembered on these shores as a fellow who lost violently to Floyd Mayweather and Pacquiao. Still, the list of British pugs who found success outside of the U.K. is a short one, and Hatton lived up to his goal of fighting in the U.S. and making some noise here. Moreover, he'll always be remembered for his classic battle with Kostya Tszyu, which saw Tszyu quit on his stool with one round remaining. **Grade: A-**

MARKETABILITY: Even when he's being peeled from the canvas, most fighters would still enjoy being in Hatton's shoes. He can still sell out big U.K. arenas if he decides to fight again. After he retires, he'll be one of those Brit celebs appearing on chat shows, promoting bouts, and showing his bum now and then. As the Brits will tell you in a singsong voice, "There's only one Ricky Hatton!" **Grade: A-**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Hatton has a nice home life, is still with Golden Boy Promotions, and still advised by his father Ray. The only question is who his trainer will be. Brit trainer Lee Beard has been in the Hatton camp for two fights and may stay on. Floyd Mayweather Sr. assumed chief training duties after Hatton split with his longtime handler Billy Graham, but there were rumors of discomfort in camp during the weeks leading up to the Pacquiao bout. If Hatton continues to fight, it's not likely that Mayweather will be in his corner. On top of that, Graham has threatened to take Hatton to court over money matters. **Grade: B**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Michael Katsidis was widely believed to be Hatton's next rival, but the most lucrative opponent in Hatton's future might be Brit rival Amir Khan. If Hatton chooses to try the welterweights again, it would be hard to pick him over any of the top names in that class. He's said he would like to fight in Manchester once more, but at press time he was still mulling over his future. **Grade: B-**

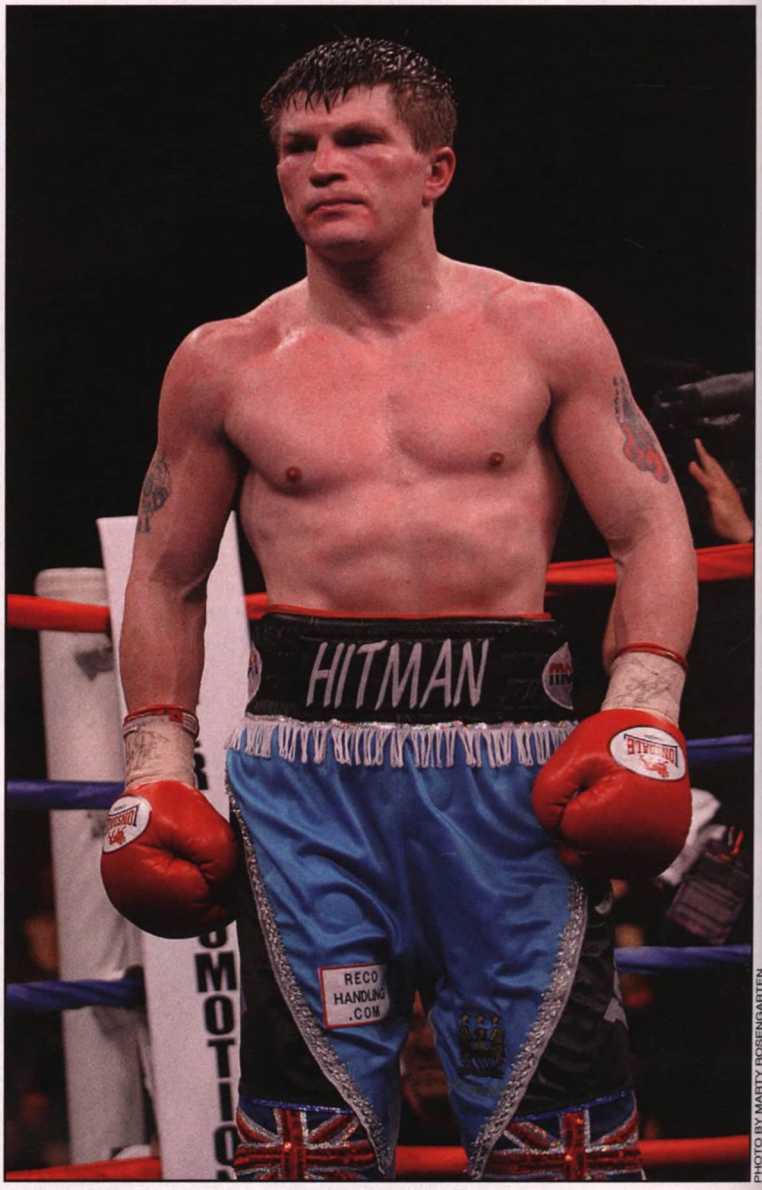


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

AMIR KHAN

WBA Junior Welterweight Titleholder

21-1 (15)

TALENT: Khan is a tall, svelte fighter with nice movement, quick hands, and reasonable punching power. He's also a good body puncher. There may always be questions about his chin and defensive lapses, which were brought into the spotlight with last year's knockout loss to Breidis Prescott, but new trainer Freddie Roach is addressing those issues. Roach is working to improve Khan's fundamentals, just as he did for Manny Pacquiao. Recently Khan showed the full extent of his abilities under Roach's tutelage by winning a lopsided decision over Andreas Kotelnik. Khan boxed beautifully, taking home the WBA junior welterweight title in the process. **Grade: A-**

ACHIEVEMENT: This is Khan's third consecutive appearance on our All-Star list, which is quite an achievement considering he's had only 22 professional fights. What a time Khan has had since last year's list. First he scored an impressive fifth-round kayo over veteran Michael Gomez, then he suffered a shocking first-round kayo loss to Prescott. Oisin Fagan, the unfortunate chap brought in to help Khan to rebuild his confidence, went out in two. Khan then won a fifth-round technical decision over fading legend Marco Antonio Barrera. A clash of heads opened a cut on Barrera's scalp that gushed like a fountain, but even without the blood, Khan was too big and too fast for the aging Barrera. In July, Khan debuted at 140, winning the WBA title from Kotelnik. **Grade: B**

MARKETABILITY: The 2004 Olympic silver medalist is already a star in England, well known for endorsements and his stance as a proud, young Muslim male. The loss to Prescott wobbled the growing Khan empire, but the wins over Barrera and Kotelnik have boosted Khan's image almost back to where it was. Khan is game to fight in America and test himself against the best. **Grade: A-**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Roach will guide Khan to places he might not have gone with previous trainers Oliver Harrison or Dean Powell. Roach has already provided invaluable public relations by telling reporters that Khan holds his own in sparring sessions with Pacquiao. Khan finds himself in the occasional automobile mishap, but he seems to be maturing. He has relocated his training camp to Roach's Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles. Brit promoter Frank Warren was criticized in the past for moving Khan too slowly, but now that Khan is a titlist, Warren may start pushing for bigger fights. **Grade: A-**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: A bout with Ricky Hatton would be a major UK event, but it's not likely this year. The chances of challenging stablemate Pacquiao for the world's title at 140 are very slim, but there are plenty of other good 140-pounders, such as Timothy Bradley, and the UK's Junior Witter. Prescott hasn't looked impressive since beating Khan—he recently lost to unheralded Miguel Vazquez—but if Prescott can get back on the winning track, a rematch isn't out of the realm of possibility. **Grade: A-**

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ

Lightweight Champion

50-4-1 (37)

TALENT: It's difficult to avoid clichés when discussing Marquez. He's a "seasoned veteran." He's a "battle-tested ring general." He's a "blood-and-guts warrior." But the clichés fit him, for he's one of the era's top fighters, and you might not find a more precise practitioner of the Sweet Science. He's a smart counterpuncher, and is effective with a variety of punches. He's also an astute analyst of opponents, with one of the coolest heads in the business. He's become more of a crowd-pleasing fighter in recent years, but his analytical talents are still intact. He is prone to cuts, and against Manny Pacquiao he has been prone to being knocked down, thrice in the first round of their first bout, and once in the return. **Grade: A**

ACHIEVEMENT: Marquez spent much of his career as an unsung figure, but two vicious bouts with Manny Pacquiao and a decision over Marco Antonio Barrera moved him into the spotlight to stay. Marquez won THE RING lightweight championship by beating Joel Casamayor last year, and he added the WBA and WBO lightweight belts by stopping Juan Diaz in February of 2009. He'd previously had respectable turns as both IBF and WBA featherweight titleholder, and WBC super featherweight titlist. Marquez has also been something of a hard luck character, losing his first title bid on points to Freddie Norwood in 1999 and dropping a close decision to Chris John in 2006. Many feel the draw and split-decision loss to Pacquiao could've gone his way too. **Grade: A**

MARKETABILITY: As his legacy grows, Marquez stands a chance to be remembered as one of Mexico's dozen greatest fighters. He's been a steady attraction in Las Vegas, and his second bout with Pacquiao drew record pay-per-view numbers for a bout below welterweight. Depending on how he does against Floyd Mayweather, there's reason to believe he will still be a major player for another year or two. **Grade: A-**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Golden Boy Promotions stands firmly behind Marquez, for Marquez could be the strongest link GBP has to the vast Mexican audience. Ignacio "Nacho" Beristain, one of Mexico's legendary boxing men, trains and manages Marquez. Beristain has taken his share of criticism for the way he's handled Marquez' business dealings, but most would agree that Marquez has ended up where he belongs. **Grade: A**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: At 36, with every fight a bit harder than the one before it, Marquez might be slightly past his prime. Still, a postponed bout with Mayweather looms on September 19. A third bout with Pacquiao is still high on everyone's list of must-see fights. If he loses to Mayweather but performs well, we could still see Marquez-Pacquiao III. If he somehow beats Mayweather, he'll become the face of GBP and a rubber match with Pacquiao will go off the charts. **Grade: B+**

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

EDWIN VALERO

WBC Lightweight Titleholder

25-0 (25)

TALENT: This vicious-punching lightweight southpaw has become boxing's latest knockout king. He's stacked up 25 consecutive opponents, and he's done it with a lightning bolt of a left hand. Valero is mostly a seek-and-destroy type of fighter, relying almost solely on his powerful left, but the Venezuelan also owns a reasonably good right jab, and is fairly light on his feet. When he senses blood, he runs in with his head high, his chin open, and he occasionally gets tagged. He was dropped by Vicente Mosquera before coming back to kayo Mosquera in the 10th for the WBA junior lightweight strap. Defensive lapses aside, he has the kind of raw strength and aggression that will carry him through most bouts. **Grade: B+**

ACHIEVEMENT: Valero made four defenses of the WBA 130-pound title, and in April 2009 won the vacant WBC lightweight belt by defeating Antonio Pitalua via third-round knockout. The early days of his career saw him win three national amateur titles and a Central and South American title. After losing his license to box in America when an MRI scan revealed a brain abnormality, he became a truly international fighter, winning bouts in Japan, Panama, and France. Texas granted him a license this year, allowing him to fight in America for the first time since 2003. **Grade: B**

MARKETABILITY: The motorcycle crash that derailed his career may turn out to be one of his selling points. We live in an era where fighters tend to get preferential treatment by networks if there's an accompanying story to tell, and Valero has one. A good story along with a big punching style makes him a natural. After being reinstated to box in Texas, it's likely Nevada will follow suit. **Grade: A-**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: The recent addition of Robert Alcazar—the original trainer of Oscar De La Hoya—to train Valero indicates the fighter believes there is room for improvement. Japan was his base of operations for a while, as he was living in Tokyo with his wife and children and being managed by the Japanese businessmen of Teiken Promotions. They did well by him, but Bob Arum and Top Rank will take Valero to a higher level. **Grade: A-**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: At press time, there were serious negotiations taking place for a defense against Mexico's Humberto Soto, THE RING's number-one junior lightweight contender. Although Soto is not anywhere near as big a puncher as Valero, he's shown respectable power at 130 pounds and is clearly a far superior technician. If Valero can dominate Soto as easily as he has most of his opponents, it could lead to a series of high-profile PPV bouts. **Grade: A-**

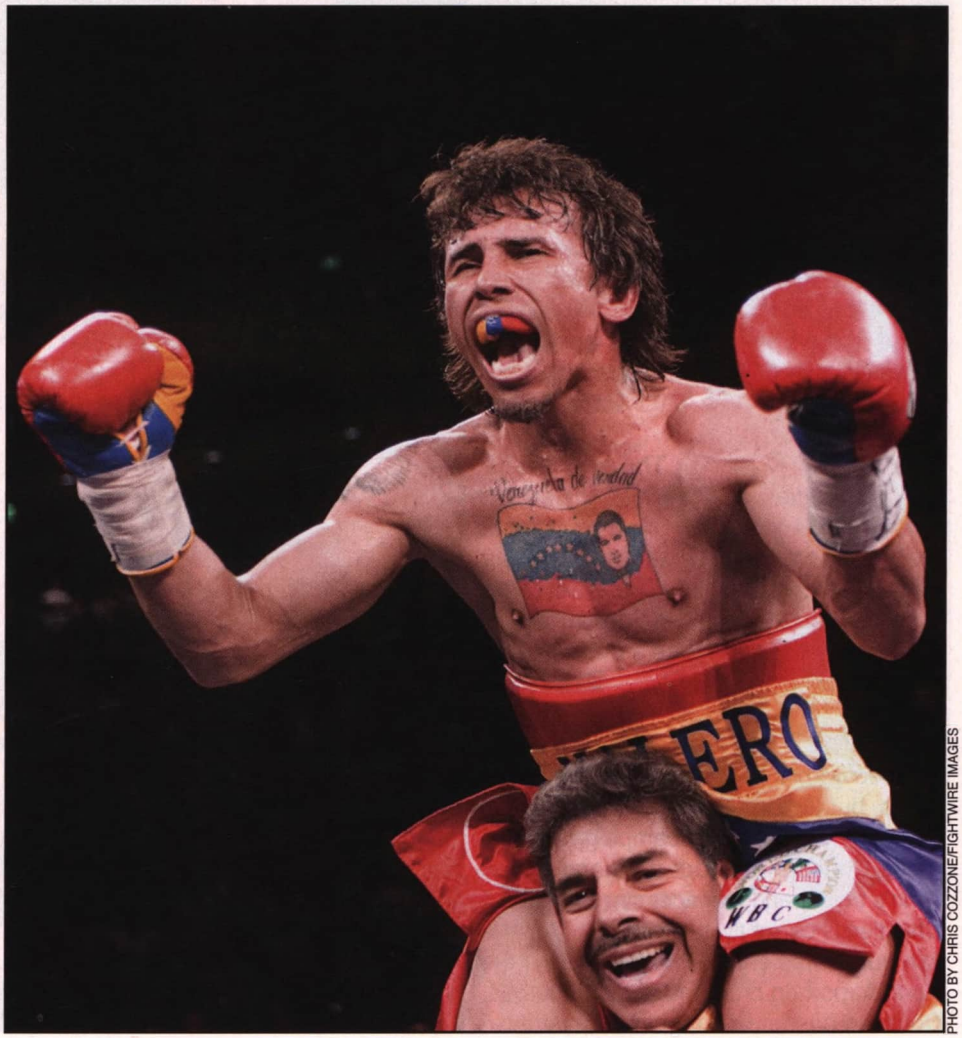


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

CHRIS JOHN

WBA Featherweight Titleholder

42-0-2 (22)

TALENT: John is a fluid fighter with great moves. He's one of the few fighters with a martial arts background to effectively make the transition to boxing. While he doesn't have remarkable power, he has a very good jab, often doubling it, and a chopping right hand. He's also stung many opponents with his right uppercut. He has great footwork and better than average ring generalship. The only drawback is a tendency to tire. Also, for a fighter known for his smooth style, John's had his share of broken noses and bad cuts. He'll occasionally surprise fans by going toe-to-toe. **Grade: A-**

ACHIEVEMENT: John's 2006 win over Juan Manuel Marquez created two camps of people: those who felt John was an unheralded international star and those who felt he won a hometown decision. It remains the key fight of his career, which is ironic since so few people saw it. In 2003, John defeated Oscar Leon for the "interim" WBA belt, and earned full recognition by beating Osamu Sati in June 2004. He has since made 10 defenses, which include wins over Derrick Gainer and Hiroyuki Enoki. John most recently journeyed to America to face rugged Rocky Juarez in Houston, Texas. John seemed to control the bout, but a late-round surge from Juarez was enough to convince all three judges to score the bout a 114-114 draw. **Grade: B+**

MARKETABILITY: The soon-to-be 30-year-old has been an Indonesian superstar for years. John often comments that he carries the weight of Indonesia on his shoulders when he enters the ring. He'll have more difficulty attracting fans in America, since he's not a knockout specialist. **Grade: B**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Many promoters handled John's Indonesian and Japanese bouts, but Golden Boy Promotions is behind his new American campaign. Aussie Craig Christian has done a good job as John's trainer and manager since 2005, but Christian is currently in trouble with Australian authorities after being arrested at the Perth Airport on drug and firearm charges. Christian has been a regular in Australian courtrooms for various offenses, plus an arrest for assault with a baseball bat on one of his own fighters. He faces a September court date. **Grade B**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: A rematch with Juarez was rescheduled for September 19. If he defeats Juarez, John will find himself surrounded by some fine fighters such as Steve Luevano, Jorge Solis, Rafael Marquez, and Israel Vazquez. John has also mentioned moving up in weight, but it's hard to tell if he has the physical strength to compete at 130 or 135. He remains THE RING's top-rated featherweight. **Grade: A+**

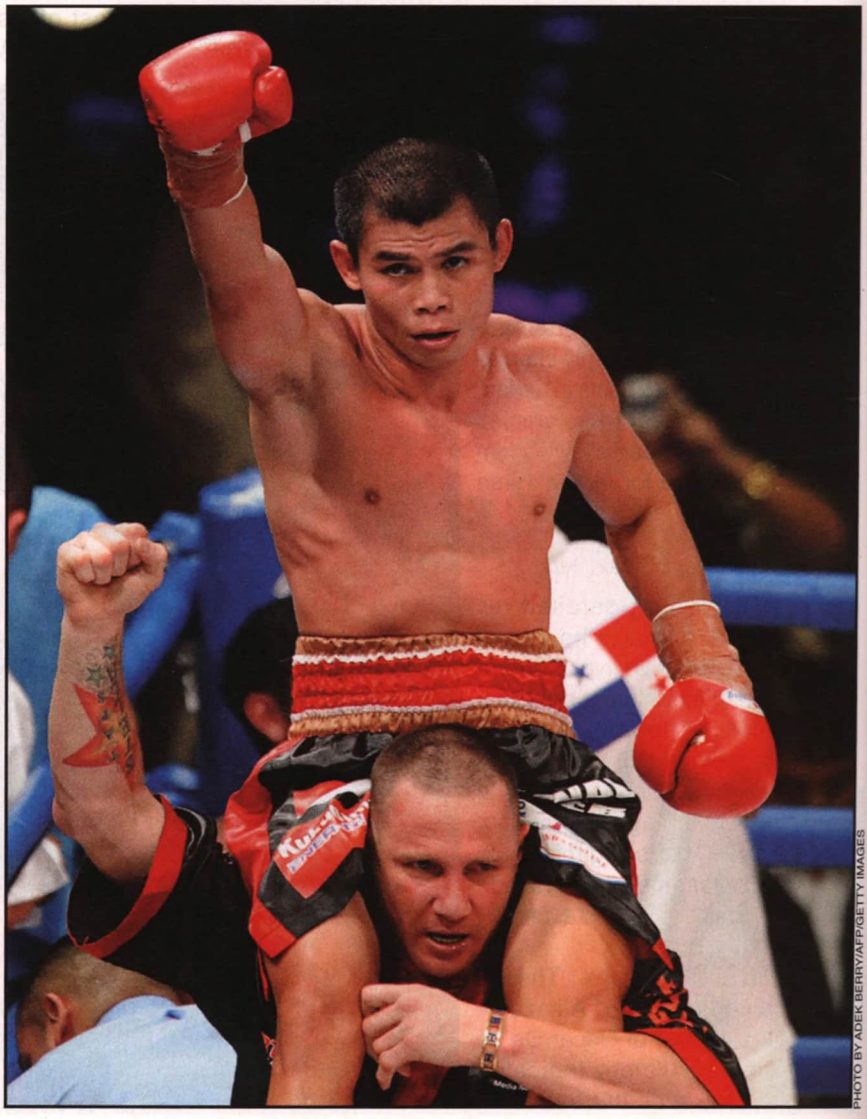


PHOTO BY ADEK BERRY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

ISRAEL VAZQUEZ

Featherweight

43-4 (31)

TALENT: Just as the late Arturo Gatti found Micky Ward near the end of his career, Vazquez found Rafael Marquez, enabling us to understand once and for all how good "Magnifico" can be. Granted, he's not the most devastating of punchers, he's not blazing fast, and his porous defense sees him cut up and bleeding in almost every fight. Yet, Vazquez makes up for his weaknesses with a competitive spirit that can only be described as exuberant. He has a brilliant left-hook/right-cross combination; he is a poised, steady boxer-puncher who doesn't need an embossed invitation to start brawling; and he knows every veteran's trick in the manual. He's a pro and a pleasure to watch. **Grade: A-**

ACHIEVEMENT: Vazquez is a two-time former RING 122-pound champion and has also won a pair of alphabet titles at that weight. He'll forever be remembered for winning two out of three classic bouts against Marquez. Prior to that, he won two of three shootouts against Oscar Larios. Also on his dossier are wins over some solid 122-pounders, including Jhonny Gonzalez, Ivan Hernandez, and Jorge Julio. After taking a break for three major retinal surgeries following the rubber match with Marquez, many fans feared that Vazquez wouldn't fight again. The announcement of his return was perhaps the best news fight fans have heard all year. **Grade: A-**

MARKETABILITY: At 31, fans are more interested in Vazquez now than ever before. He did some broadcasting work for Telemundo last year, and his warm personality could help him in that field if he chooses to pursue it. In a way, taking a year off from boxing was good for his marketability—people have had a chance to view the "trilogy" over and over again on late night cable. He'll return like a long lost hero. **Grade: B+**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Vazquez has a strong team behind him, starting with his loyal manager, Frank Espinosa, and trainer, Rudy Perez. Perez was with Marco Antonio Barrera for many years and helped Barrera shift from slugger to boxer. Likewise, Perez has encouraged Vazquez to box more, which helped against Marquez. The co-promotional deal Vazquez has enjoyed with Sycuan Ringside and Golden Boy Promotions is coming to an end. As far as Espinosa is concerned, GBP will be handling Vazquez in the future. **Grade: A-**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Vazquez is a bit war torn, so we can't see him fighting for much longer. Still, a fourth battle with Marquez, probably at featherweight, was being negotiated at press time. Beyond that, there will perhaps be a few more fights, with lots of hype, and hopefully some good paydays for this gallant little fighter. **Grade: A-**

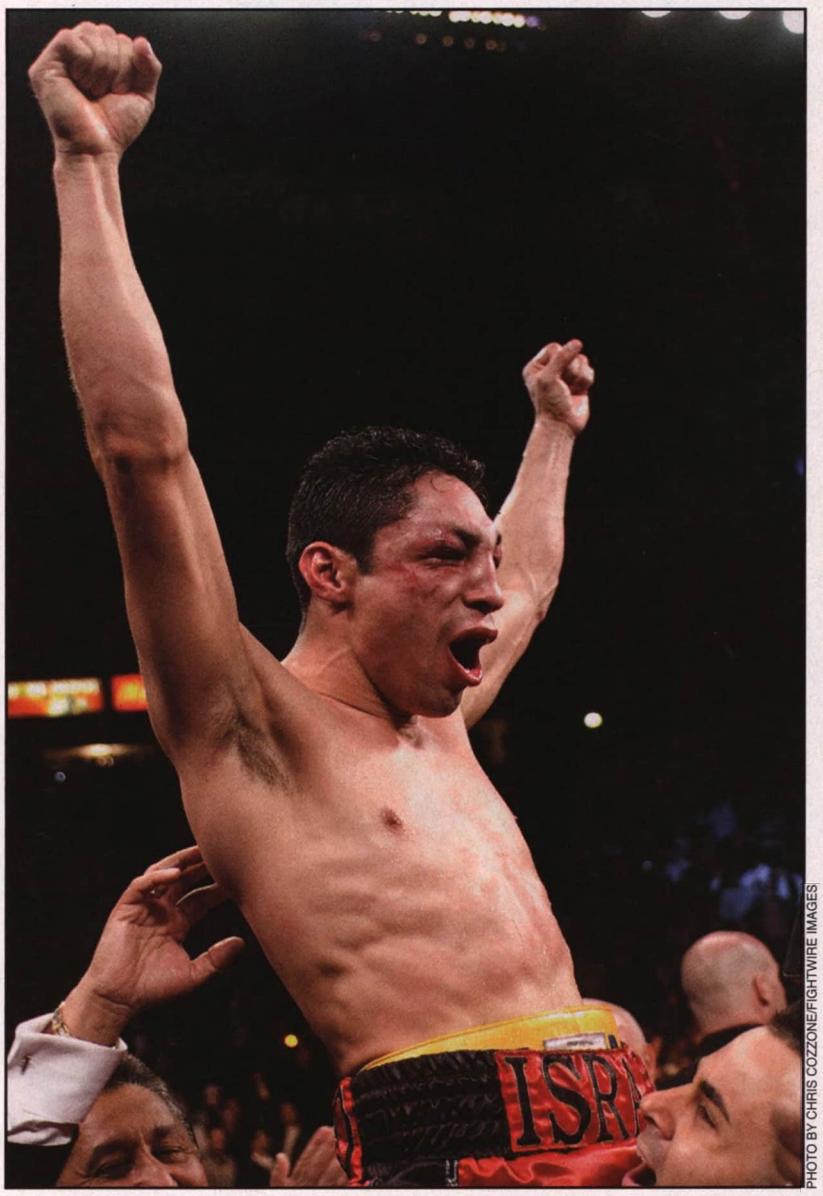


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Juan Manuel Lopez trades with Olivier Lontchi during their June 27, 2009, fight in Atlantic City. Lontchi gave "Juanma" more trouble than some recent foes, but was stopped in the ninth round.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ

Junior Featherweight

26-0 (24)

TALENT: Southpaw Lopez is a combination puncher who can hit hard with both hands. His straight left is dangerous and he has a quick right hook. He's also a diligent, calculating, bodypuncher, possesses good footwork, and has a sound defense. Lopez faced a wee bit of adversity in his most recent bout when Olivier Lontchi resorted to rough tactics. At times Lopez was frustrated, but he still managed to drop Lontchi twice en route to a ninth-round TKO. It was a sign that Lopez has professionalism to go along with his hard punches. That's bad news for junior featherweights. **Grade: A-**

ACHIEVEMENT: Lopez won the WBO junior featherweight belt by scoring a vicious first-round kayo of Daniel Ponce De Leon in June 2008. He followed with two more first-round stoppages over Cesar Figueroa and Sergio Medina. In April of 2009, Lopez needed 10 rounds to stop game veteran Gerry Penalosa. Prior to turning pro, Lopez compiled an amateur record of 126-24, highlighted by an appearance at the 2004 Olympics. He lost in his opening bout, but turned pro six months later, rattling off nine consecutive knockouts before being extended 10 rounds by journeyman Gilberto Bolanos. Lopez made his American debut in June 2006, fighting at Madison Square Garden on the undercard of the Miguel Cotto-Paul Malignaggi bout. Lontchi was his 14th consecutive knockout victim. **Grade: B**

MARKETABILITY: There's always room in boxing for a Puerto Rican knockout artist. The comparisons to past Puerto Rican stars may be premature, but Lopez' win over Lontchi was the main event of Top Rank's "Latin Fury 9" pay-per-view from Atlantic City, and he'll probably be a regular attraction on HBO or Showtime. There is already talk of him headlining next year's June Madison Square Garden show on the weekend of the annual Puerto Rican Day parade, a slot usually belonging to Cotto. **Grade: A-**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Top Rank has tremendous belief in Lopez. Along with Arum's vigorous promotion, Lopez is trained by Alex Caraballo. Lopez credits Caraballo with helping him study tapes of fighters and turning him into a thinking man's knockout puncher. Lopez seems to be an intelligent, happy-go-lucky young man with a solid personal life, which will help him during his rise. **Grade: A**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Lopez is from Caguas, the same as Cotto. Unlike Cotto in his early days, there aren't lots of marquee fighters to help make Lopez a star. It appears Lopez will soon be moving to featherweight, where he might take on the winner of August's bout between Steven Luevano and Bernabe Concepcion, which isn't exactly like young Cotto aiming for the likes of Oscar De La Hoya and Shane Mosley. Top Rank is banking on Cuban featherweight Yoriorkis Gamboa achieving stardom and fighting Lopez in the future. Until then, 26-year-old Lopez has to build on his legacy, beating whomever is put in front of him. If there's anything left of Vazquez or Marquez after their proposed fourth bout, perhaps Lopez can pick at the remains. **Grade: A**

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

NONITO DONAIRE

Super Flyweight

21-1 (14)

TALENT: Donaire is good on his feet, throws speedy combinations, can hit with power, and has a good boxing mind. His left hook is a moneymaker, and he's a very good counterpuncher. He carries his hands low, but can get away with it because of his quickness. The 26-year-old's boyish, unassuming looks may work in his favor, as opponents tend to underestimate him. **Grade A-**

ACHIEVEMENT: Donaire was the 2000 United States Amateur champion and reached the finals of the 2000 Olympic Trials, only to lose a decision to Brian Viloria. Donaire turned pro in 2001, one year after his brother Gary entered the pro field. After losing his second pro fight, Donaire mounted a 16-fight undefeated streak before scoring a stunning fifth-round knockout of the supposedly invincible Vic Darchinyan. The bout earned Donaire the IBF flyweight title and was chosen as THE RING's Upset of the Year and Knockout of the Year for 2007. Donaire has looked impressive since then, kayoing Luis Maldonado, Moruti Mthalane, and Raul Martinez. **Grade A-**

MARKETABILITY: As the second-most popular fighter from the Philippines, Donaire has a loyal audience that will grow if he continues to win. He's also lived in California for years, which may help attract a West Coast following. Top Rank will also benefit him, since Bob Arum knows how to best promote international stars. Following the success of their Latin Fury pay-per-view shows, Top Rank has created "Pinoy Power," which will showcase Donaire and other Filipinos. It's rare for such a tiny fighter to gain a wide audience, but Donaire may do it. **Grade: B+**

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Donaire instigated a much-needed split with his father/trainer, Nonito Sr., and has since hired the Penalosa brothers, Gerry, Dodie Boy, and Jonathon. Along with changing trainers, Donaire also split with promoter Gary Shaw to join Top Rank. Shaw has called Donaire ungrateful in the press, and the Filipino culture may see Donaire's behavior as disrespectful, but these moves have helped create a more comfortable atmosphere and most likely a busier fight schedule. A strong marriage with Rachel, plus a good relationship with brother Gary round out the Donaire circle. **Grade: A-**

GROWTH POTENTIAL: At press time Donaire was scheduled to face Rafael Concepcion. This will be Donaire's return to 115-pounds where he fought earlier in his career. It's for an "interim" alphabet title since titlist Darchinyan is now campaigning at 118. Of even more importance than organizational straps, fans may look forward to Donaire someday facing the likes of Jorge Arce. There are also some stars at flyweight who might come up to 115, such as Japan's colorful Koki Kameda, Daisuke Naito, and Thailand's 74-fight veteran Pongsaklek Wonjongkam. Donaire has fought at 118 in the past, and 118 is probably in his future too. The only drawback is what seems to be a love-hate relationship with the sport. Donaire hated it once; he may hate it again. That will be his, and our, loss. **Grade: A-**

PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

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A Pretty Face And A Great Personality Does Not An Oscar Make

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

NOW IT'S TIME FOR VICTOR ORTIZ TO TAKE HIS TIME

By Ivan Goldman

What makes the sport of boxing so exciting is precisely what makes the business of boxing so risky and unpredictable. This was graphically demonstrated once again when Victor Ortiz, Golden Boy Promotions' designated new prince, couldn't make it through six rounds with a barely known Argentine who'd never fought in the U.S. before.

It was a heck of a fight while it lasted, featuring five knockdowns and nonstop action from two guys who came to fight, but no matter how you slice it, it was the other guy whose hand was raised by the referee.

There were warning signals that perhaps all the publicity put out in behalf of Ortiz was, like a fanatically determined infantry scout, getting too far ahead of the main body. Or, to try another analogy, the people who'd built the Ortiz celebrity juggernaut were like a jockey too busy looking down the track to notice who was coming up the rail. In this case it was a determined junior welter named Marcos Maidana, who was already ranked number 10 by THE RING going into the fight, and he wasn't impressed that even MTV had already classified Ortiz as a hero.

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

For a few rounds it looked like Ortiz would live up to expectations. He floored Maidana three times, once in the first round and twice in the second, but the slugger from Argentina kept getting up and battling back with hurtful punches of his own.

Maidana's victory was very, very good for him and, of course, not so good for the previously undefeated Ortiz. But it was far worse for the Golden Boy business plan, which had counted on exciting, personable Ortiz grabbing the golden baton passed to him from the very recently retired Oscar De La Hoya and running it up the field to crossover stardom, celebrity endorsements, and who knows what else. Standing invitations from Dave and Conan, congratulatory phone calls from Barack, lunches with Tiger, and buckets and buckets of big-time cash. Not that any of this can't happen, but even if it does, none of it waits around the very next corner, at least not anymore.

Also not so thrilled with the outcome was HBO, which, like the promoter, was counting chickens yet to be hatched and ended up with egg on its face. Sure, HBO can still put on future Ortiz bouts. Who wouldn't want to see such an exciting competitor again? And it might also do well showing more of the hard-hitting Maidana. But in terms of star quality, neither of them is Oscar. In fact, that may be the biggest lesson of the night: Only Oscar can be Oscar. He was a phenomenon. You can't just tally up his ingredients and assemble a duplicate. One of these days another phenomenon will come along, but the process contains certain magical components that defy analysis. And some ingredients that can be analyzed—such as the fantastic speed of young Oscar's fists and his formidable chin—weren't possessed by Ortiz in equal measure.

Also working against Ortiz was the jackal syndrome, something De La Hoya had to struggle against for virtually his entire career. Writers, trainers, boxing historians, and other members of the boxing community might seem perfectly reasonable and decent folks, but give them the right victim to torment and an excuse to pounce and they'll be all over him, ripping his flesh with their teeth. In this case, the pack was aroused because the beaten Ortiz basically gave up 46 seconds into round six. A fighter, they say, is supposed to be made of sterner stuff. Maybe, maybe not (*see sidebar page 75)*

Golden Boy Promotions invited its own massacre by letting everyone know that Ortiz would be its new standard-bearer, its new "Golden Boy." His defeat was therefore colored by a strong element of what the Germans call *schadenfreude*—pleasure derived from the misfortune of others. The

Maybe It's Maidana Who's "The Next Oscar"

It was generally agreed that Victor Ortiz, though a hard puncher, could call on more boxing skills than slugger Marcos Maidana. Consequently, it was no surprise when Maidana challenged him toe-to-toe, creating the kind of contest that would give the Argentine a more level playing field. And that's exactly what happened.

Less than a minute into round one Maidana, 139¾, waded in, swinging for the fences. And he soon went down from an Ortiz flurry, though he didn't look terribly hurt. Later in that same round, Ortiz, 140, hit the deck hard from a big right. By round two it was clear that Maidana owned the inside, and it looked like he was hurting Ortiz when southpaw Ortiz put him down with a perfect right hook, and did it again with the same punch after the 10-second warning, earning himself a 10-7 round.

By this time both fighters had abandoned the jab and looked only for the big shots. In round three, Ortiz got tagged hard coming forward. He was having increasing trouble picking up Maidana's right hands, but then he got the best of it in the fourth round.

Maidana used clinches to hammer his opponent with rabbit punches, paying no heed to warnings from referee Raul Caiz Sr. (USA). Maidana, as he confirmed later on, had no intention of sending this bout to the scorecards, so was probably unconcerned about possibly losing points anyway.

In round five, a flurry from Ortiz included a solid uppercut, but Maidana once again caught him flush with a right hand while the eager Ortiz came forward. They traded bombs. The fight by this time resembled Arturo Gatti-Micky Ward. Maidana caught offense-minded Ortiz with yet another huge right. Ortiz was leaking blood from above his right eye.

In round six, Maidana walked straight up to Ortiz and landed a big right, then a series of rights. Ortiz went down, and turned his back after rising, shaking his head no. A huge welt was growing beneath his left eye. Caiz, instead of taking a count, called in ring physician Paul Wallace, and they agreed. It was over.

Minutes later the candid Ortiz confirmed to HBO's Max Kellerman that after the last knockdown he concluded he was done for the night.

—I.G.

Toe-to-toe action had the crowd in an uproar

PHOTO BY ALEXIS CUAREZMA/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

bigger the target, the bigger the satisfaction when it's toppled, and Ortiz' oversized, overdone buildup made him a much bigger target than a 22-year-old fighter ought to be. The very same weekend Maidana vanquished Ortiz, Governor Mark Sanford of South Carolina, who as a congressman had voted to impeach Bill Clinton for lying about an affair, was blubbering apologies after being caught in the company of a woman not his wife. S*chadenfreude* seemed unusually thick in late-June, but it's a standard human trait that never grows old and never tires, always waiting to spring and devour.

Mostly forgotten, however, was something that ought to be remembered: The story that Golden Boy and HBO were selling to the public was basically true. Ortiz *is* a good-looking, talented young man who's extremely personable, candid, and well spoken in both English and Spanish and who emerged whole and cheerful from a background so abominable, it would give pause to Charles Dickens himself.

Ortiz and his siblings *were* deserted one at a time by their mother and then their alcoholic, abusive father, and Victor *was* pretty much left to his own devices at the age of 12. When Ortiz

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

The thrilling two-way action had the announced crowd of 8,600 enthralled, and had he prevailed, Ortiz' career would have received a tremendous boost. But in an all-out slugfest, the fighter with the better chin and superior resiliency usually prevails, and in this case that fighter was Maidana.

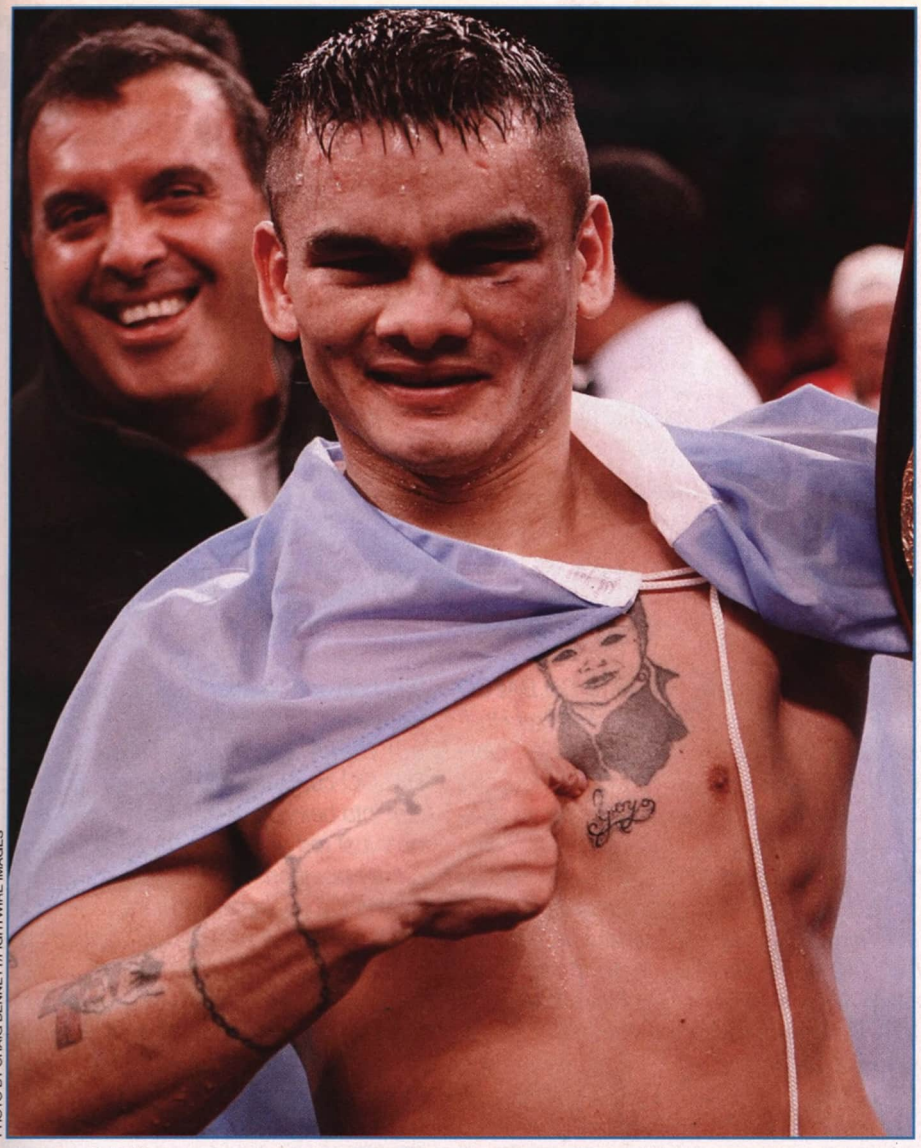
PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

HBO's Max Kellerman interviews the battered Ortiz moments after the Californian's crushing defeat. Some critics ripped Ortiz for quitting, but by the time the fight was stopped he'd already taken a serious beating and was having difficulty seeing out of his swollen left eye.

started making a name for himself as an amateur boxer and was receiving expense payments for his meals at tournaments, he would spend them on things like shoes for his little brother. None of that has changed. Ortiz is still a good guy with a great story, and he can fight like the devil. The loss to Maidana occurred in one of the most exciting contests seen in recent years. One defeat should never bring down a fighter's career, though in the cruel world we inhabit, it sometimes can.

So Golden Boy is now looking through the debris of a disaster. And you can bet that someone connected to that disaster will pay an individual price. When a ball club suffers a dreadful season, the manager may have perfectly reasonable excuses, but his job is probably cooked anyway.

In the immediate aftermath of the night that went wrong, plenty of fingers were pointed at relatively unknown Oxnard trainer Danny Garcia, who,



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Although Ortiz was not rated going into the fight, Maidana's TKO victory was good enough for him to climb from number 10 to number eight in THE RING ratings. Thanks to his highly entertaining style and undeniable courage, "El Chino" could easily become a fan favorite in the U.S.

because he still hangs on to his day job, doesn't get the same respect as, say, a Freddie Roach or an Emanuel Steward. Ortiz contended Garcia gave him a fine game plan, but he just got excited and didn't follow it, choosing to go toe-to-toe instead.

Golden Boy may or may not have been aware that in its rush to manufacture another Oscar, the fighter wasn't given the same time to develop that the more naturally gifted Oscar was given. Following the 1992 Olympics, Bob Arum and his Top Rank organization steered his career perfectly, developing him as a fighter and an attraction. As he took on more formidable opponents, he was always prepared for the next obstacle, until finally in 1999 he suffered his first defeat after 31 victories, losing a Las Vegas decision to Don King's Felix Trinidad.

Oscar also was not matched this early on with a kayo artist like Maidana. Make mistakes against a boxer and you can possibly correct them in the next round. Make mistakes against a slugger and there's an excellent chance you'll have to wait until your next fight.

At age 22, Oscar fought John-John Molina, Rafael Ruelas, Genaro Hernandez, and Jesse James Leija. They were all excellent fighters, but none of them could hit like Maidana, who carried a record of 25-1 (24) going in. The only opponent Maidana, 25, failed to beat was Andreas Kotelnik, a Ukrainian fighting out of Germany who beat him by split decision in Germany. Maidana, a genuine slugger, was a road warrior who'd fought several times in Europe and was used to kayoing homegrown heroes on their own turf.

While Golden Boy may have been convinced that Maidana was the right opponent for Ortiz, taking on a top-10 fighter with a punch is a risk that must have proper rewards. With this contest on HBO's *Boxing After Dark*, that's a sure sign that the money for Ortiz-Maidana was insufficient compensation for that risk.

Poking through the wreckage of that night, you find Team Ortiz was flattened by a perfect storm. Nothing went the way it was supposed to, and not everything that happened was preventable. Golden Boy and HBO had planned something unusual in boxing these days—a doubleheader featuring two excellent bouts. But the rematch between featherweights Rocky Juarez and Chris John was cancelled as a co-feature less than a week before the card after John was felled by illness. That meant youngster Ortiz had to fill the 20,000-seat Staples Center in Los Angeles all by himself. He just wasn't that well known. Maidana brought in a smattering of fans from L.A.'s relatively small Argentine community, but he was basically unknown in the U.S. The sequence of events left Ortiz, 24-2-1 (19), stuck out there in a huge venue on national TV with more publicity than was good for him, a powerful hitter in front of him, and a pack of jackals licking their chops. He just wasn't ready.

"I probably tried to put on too much of a show," he explained later, citing the 8,600 fans on hand and all the hoopla. And he said something else that ought to be heeded. "I've tasted dirt. I came from nothing. I'll be back." ■

Ivan Goldman, THE RING's West Coast correspondent, was ringside at the Staples Center for Maidana-Ortiz.

Shane Mosley

"I Want To Fight Until I Can't Fight No More"

This is a time when we were supposed to be writing about "Sugar" Shane Mosley's career not with fingers on a computer keyboard, but with a chisel on a tombstone. This past January, Antonio Margarito, fresh off a stoppage of Miguel Cotto and full of confidence and momentum, was supposed to bury Mosley's elite-fighter status so far underground that it would require a team of miners working double shifts to locate it again. Mosley was at risk of becoming granulated Sugar.

Maybe literally.

While observing the prefight taping of Margarito's hands, Mosley's is trainer, Naazim Richardson, noticed a plaster substance being applied to the Mexican's handwraps. After the fistic funny business was over, Mosley got down to business of his own and stopped Margarito in the ninth round. The win moved Mosley, 46-5 (39), into the top spot in the welterweight rankings and returned him to an even more ritzy address: a precious place in the Pound-For-Pound ratings.

Mosley's should be the feel-good story of the year, but, well, this is boxing. A month before the Margarito bout, it was reported that, in 2003, Mosley testified before a grand jury looking into the BALCO case that he used steroids prior to his '03 rematch with Oscar De La Hoya. Mosley later told the press that he took the substances, mistakenly thinking they were vitamins. But BALCO founder Victor Conte and Derryl Hudson, a former trainer of Mosley's, have claimed the fighter knew he was using performance-enhancing drugs. Mosley and attorney Judd Burstein are suing Conte for libel.

In July, RING columnist Jeff Ryan spoke with Mosley, who was hanging out at his training camp in Big Bear, California, keeping in shape though not sure exactly what for. The three-division titlist was occupying his time staying sharp in the gym, working for De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions, and training his son, amateur fighter Shane Jr. But except for THE RING's call to him, his phone wasn't ringing much.

Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather have other names in their date books, a young hotshot like Andre Berto probably isn't anxious to take such a huge leap in the quality of his opposition, and showdowns against the likes of Paul Williams, Zab Judah, or Joshua Clottey haven't yet materialized. For Mosley, who turns 38 in September and is coming off one of the most exciting victories of a career that began all the way back when Bill Clinton was in his first term, there couldn't be a worse time to discover that many of the world's premier welterweights want to keep their schedules Sugar-free.

Ryan reports: "You'd expect someone in Mosley's position to be bitching and bellyaching about being disrespected and not getting what he deserves, but that's not his way. Maybe the BALCO controversy has embarrassed him into being more low-key or perhaps he's just too grateful to be back in such a lofty position. More likely, we're just seeing the coolness of Shane Mosley, a fighter who has never extinguished his smile and always looked at the bright side in any situation ever since he first turned pro in 1993. He has recaptured his mojo in 2009. What does he capture going forward?"

The Ring: Did you ever think you'd still be fighting, and performing this well, 16 years into your pro career?

Shane Mosley: Yeah, I really knew that I would. As a young kid, I wanted to be the best out there one day, and I've always tried to become that. My goal was to not just be a world champion, but be one of the greats in the history of the sport, and a lot of great fighters who loved the game like I do fought this long. They never got tired of it.

The Ring: When athletes age, they often lose some desire to train, to get up as early in the morning, or to push themselves as hard as they once did in the gym. Is it tougher for you to maintain the intensity you had, say, five years ago?

SM: No, because I just love to work out. Boxing is fun to me, not a job. It's

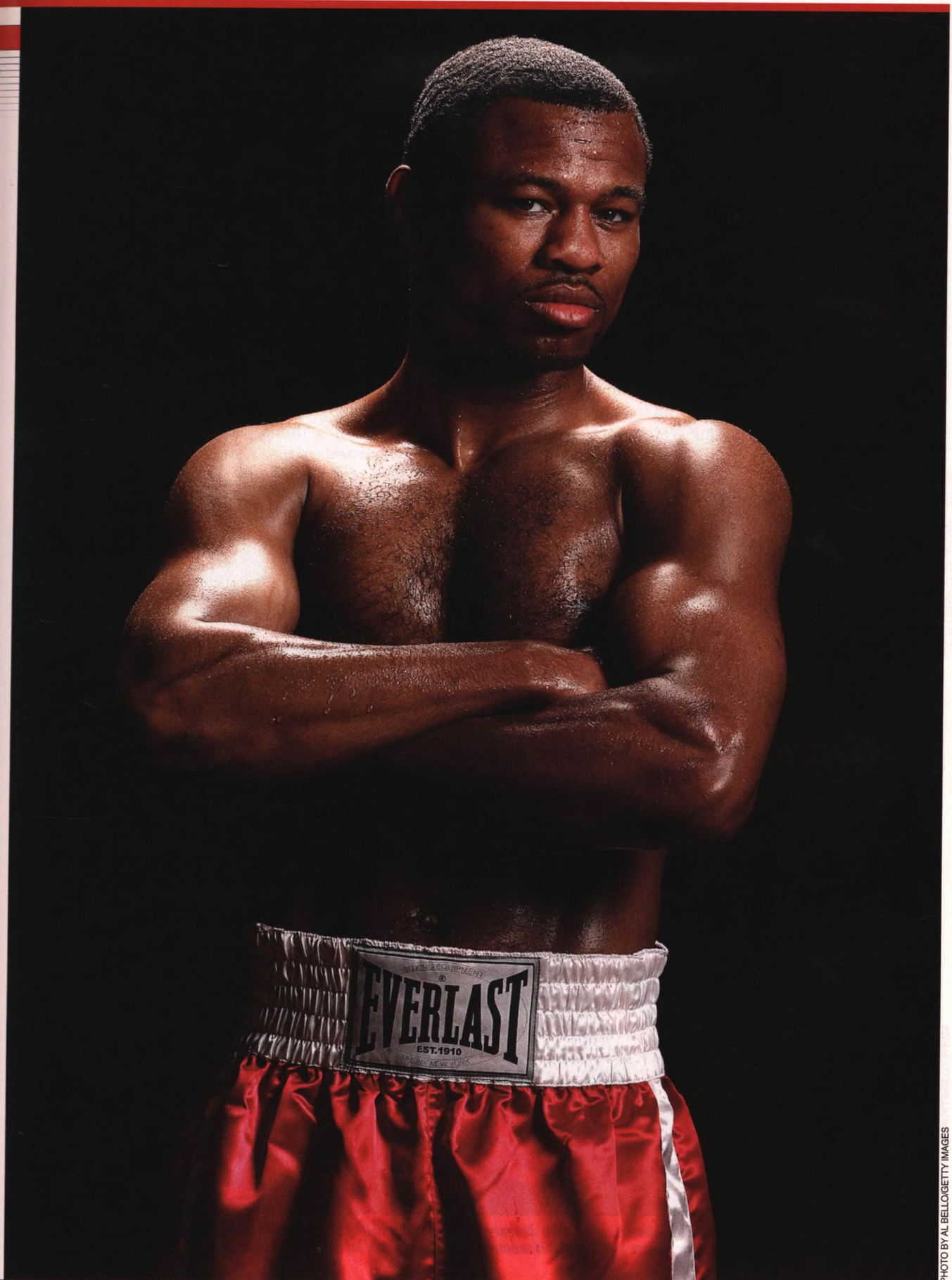

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

actually *fun*. I enjoy training at anything. I'm an outdoor type of guy. I play basketball, snowboard, ride bikes, swim, and all those sorts of things. I'm even in a bowling league.

The Ring: How good of a bowler are you?

SM: My high score is 242.

The Ring: That's pretty good.

SM: Yeah, that's not bad.

The Ring: The win over Margarito was a shock to most of us. Did you actually believe you could knock out a guy who'd never been stopped?

SM: I really didn't know, to tell you the truth. I was just going for the win, and if the knockout didn't happen that was okay, as long as I got the victory. But I had two sparring partners that were 185, 190 pounds. They were big but fast. They fought more like middleweights. And when they felt my sting, the sharpness of my punches, they kept telling me, "You're gonna knock Margarito out."

Miguel Cotto, Joshua Clottey, Paul Williams, none of those guys could hurt Margarito. When they hit him, they didn't even knock him back. Cotto was hitting Margarito with all kind of shots, and he just kept walking in. When I hit him, I stopped him in his tracks and knocked him back.

The Ring: That was your best performance in years. To what do you attribute that?

SM: Sometimes fighters overwork themselves, and with this fight, I didn't do that. I cut back on a little bit of running and rested more. When you get older you need to let your body rest just as much as you need to push it to work.

The Ring: When did you first learn of the handwrap controversy, and what was your immediate reaction?

SM: Right before I went into the ring. Naazim Richardson brought the handwraps to my dressing room and showed them to me. I said, "Okay, let's go fight." I really didn't care, to tell you the truth. It really didn't matter to me if he had those handwraps on or not. I was in a mode that night that I had to show the world how good I still was. I didn't want to just *say* I was the best welterweight; I wanted to show it and fight my best fight ever.

I was given the choice to fight Andre Berto or Margarito. Berto was considered second level and Margarito was first level. I could have beaten Berto and then moved on to Margarito later. But I wanted Margarito because people thought he was the best. I actually thank Margarito for fighting me because a lot of guys, as you know, don't wish to fight me at this point in time. Regardless of what happened with the wraps, he showed a lot of heart by

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Mosley hammers Antonio Margarito in the ninth round of their January 2009 fight, prompting the Mexican slugger's corner to throw the white towel of surrender into the ring. Mosley's performance was so good it seems to have scared off a lot of potential opponents.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Mosley congratulates Manny Pacquiao following Pac-Man's victory over Oscar De La Hoya. Sugar Shane would love to fight the Filipino dynamo.

stepping in the ring with me and putting his title on the line.

The Ring: Didn't you have a real desire to punish Margarito after he tried to cheat?

SM: No, not at all. I guess he was just protecting his hands. Maybe he used [the substance in the handwraps] in sparring and decided he was going to take them into the fight. I put most of the blame on (Margarito trainer) Javier Capetillo because he knows better, as a trainer.

The Ring: You're certainly giving Margarito the benefit of the doubt. Everybody thinks he tried to put plaster in his handwraps because he wanted an advantage.

SM: People say different things, but I think he was doing it because he hurt his hands. If you looked at his knuckle pads, as I did, you could see that his hands had been bleeding. There was blood on the knuckle pads. I think maybe he hurt his hand and felt he needed to use that [foreign substance] to fight me. When I fought Oscar the second time, my hands were hurting so bad that I needed to get a cortisone shot so that I could hit with them. Maybe Margarito didn't want to get a cortisone shot. If not, he might have wanted to put extra protection in there.

The Ring: Miguel Cotto believes Margarito loaded up his gloves when they fought.

SM: Paul Williams fought him, too, and said he didn't think Margarito did that against him.

The Ring: Do you ever think about what could have happened to your face if Margarito didn't get caught before the bout?

SM: Nothing could have happened to my face because he didn't hit me. I don't care if he was fighting with bare knuckles; he wasn't beating me that night. Nobody would have beaten me that night.

The Ring: Are you surprised that you haven't landed a big fight after such an impressive showing?

SM: I might as well have been suspended with Margarito because we'll probably get in a ring again at about the same time *(laughs)*. There are a lot of fights out there, but I think [the knockout of Margarito] scared the promoters. It scared (Margarito's and Pacquiao's promoter) Bob Arum, because he was so sure that I was going to lose.

The Ring: You've called out Mayweather and Pacquiao, and there has been talk of matching you with Williams, Berto, Clottey, and Zab Judah. Who's at the top of your list?

SM: Mayweather *or* Pacquiao, they're the two guys everybody believes are the pound-for-pound best.

The Ring: Pick one.

SM: I don't know. Either one. They're both equally significant.

The Ring: How would you fight them?

SM: Pacquiao's very fast. I'm fast, too, but I'd probably have to use my size and reach advantage on him. With

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"What sets the old-time guys apart from us is that they had more heart, more willpower. Back in the day, they never quit in the ring. They would get knocked out instead. They fought with everything they had. I think I've adopted a little bit of the new-era style and the old-era style."

Mayweather, everybody goes after him and gets hit with counters. Maybe I'd have to test him in the center of the ring and see how it goes from there. I'd probably box more against Pacquiao and be more aggressive against Mayweather, but in a smart way.

The Ring: Do you ever get to speak with Mayweather?

SM: Yeah, I talk with him. I play basketball with him. Andre Agassi has a 24-hour fitness center in Las Vegas and we've played there a couple of times. Just pick-up ball. He's another great athlete.

The Ring: One-on-one or five-on-five?

SM: Five-on-five.

The Ring: On opposing teams?

SM: Of course.

The Ring: And there's no rough stuff under the boards?

SM: *(Laughing)* I'm bigger and stronger than he is.

The Ring: So he doesn't challenge you in the paint?

SM: He tried a couple of times, but I guess he figured out that I'm bigger than him.

The Ring: Do you guys ever talk about fighting each other?

SM: We'll talk about it, and he says no, he wants to take care of his kids. Or guys in my camp will ask, "When are you gonna fight Shane?" Mayweather will say, "Oh, I'm doing this or I'm doing that." But in the media he'll say something else, like he wants to beat me. I'm not going to beg him to fight me. I'm just not going to do that. If he wants to fight, let's fight. The fans want to see it. If he wants to prove he's the best in the business, he'll fight me. There are really no excuses anymore. You can't say that I'm not an elite fighter or I'm on the downside. I just beat the best welterweight, hands down.

The Ring: What comes easier for you in the ring than it ever did, and what's more difficult because you're getting a little older?

SM: *Wow!* I think everything's coming easily now. I really do. You know, I don't feel my age at this point. It's remarkable how I'm maturing. Boxing is a mental game, and as I get older, I'm relaxing more. If you believe in yourself, anything can happen. That's what I'm finding out as I get older.

The Ring: How much longer do you think you can compete at the elite level?

SM: Five more years.

The Ring: That takes you up to age 43. You really think you'll be that good for five more years? Do you even want to be competing for that long?

SM: Yeah. I want to do it for 10 more years, but I'll probably cut it off at five.

The Ring: It sounds like you hope to be the lighter-weight George Foreman.

SM: I want to fight until I can't fight no more. If someone pays *me* $200-million, I'll shave my head and stand in front of a grill too.

The Ring: And have five sons named Shane?

SM: No, *that* won't happen. There's only one.

The Ring: Do you think that you were somewhat over-hyped earlier in your career? In 1999, *Sport* magazine said, "Sugar just may be the greatest lightweight of all-time."

SM: It was true.

The Ring: The biggest name you'd beaten at that stage was Jesse James Leija.

SM: And John-John Molina, who gave Oscar a pretty good fight. ***(Editor's note: Molina dropped a 12-round decision to De La Hoya in 1995. Mosley stopped Molina in the eighth round in '98.)***

The Ring: You think you were better than Roberto Duran, Benny Leonard, Henry Armstrong?

SM: I think I patterned myself a little bit after Duran. It would have been interesting if we fought. Henry Armstrong and Leonard were definitely great and would have been tough. We always give credit to the older guys for being so good, but boxing has evolved like every other sport. Technically, I think fighters of this era have an advantage. We have some pretty good technicians around today. We box a little more than the guys in the old days did, so we may end up with less punch-drunk fighters in the future.

What sets the old-time guys apart from us is that they had more heart, more willpower. Back in the day, they never quit in the ring. They would get knocked out instead. They fought with everything they had. I think I've adopted a little bit of the new-era style *and* the old-era style. That's why I can be considered in that realm of great lightweights. I would have much rather competed in the old days because those guys actually f*ought*. I have the heart of a throwback fighter who liked to get in there and mix it up.

The Ring: Despite a great career, you have five defeats on your record. That's a lot for someone so talented.

SM: Sometimes you just fight opponents who are very good. I only lost to three people: Vernon Forrest, Winky Wright, and Cotto, and the Cotto scoring was iffy. ***(Editor's note: Mosley lost by two, two, and three points.)***

DON'T MISS WILLIAM DETTLOFF

EVERY MONDAY ... EXCLUSIVELY ON: ringtv.com

Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, The Ring's senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The effects of steroids: If steroids compelled men to kill their families, the terrible sound of James Toney, married father of six, slinging deviled eggs down his throat would right now be echoing throughout his otherwise silent, corpse-strewn house.

Post-fight interviews: If you too were wondering why Vic Darchinyan made no real sense five minutes after getting pancaked, consider that five minutes before, he'd gotten pancaked. Why are people always surprised when a fighter who's just suffered a concussion says nonsensical things?

The white stuff: If you've never seen (Alexander) Povetkin, picture mayonnaise in short pants and gloves. This guy is so white he makes Sultan Ibragimov look like Wesley Snipes.

Dettloff on ringtv.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

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Winky was a great defensive fighter and Vernon was a top welterweight. Mayweather wouldn't dare get in the ring with Vernon, Winky, or Cotto. He'll pick and choose and get in there with guys who are a little bit smaller, who he thinks he could beat.

The Ring: You've beaten a few opponents who were better than some of the fighters you lost to.

SM: Styles make fights. Forrest wasn't strong mentally against Ricardo Mayorga, but he got up for my fight. He has great technique and speed and was a little bit taller than me. Really and truly, I didn't fight my best fights in that era, when I had my assistant trainer, my so-called "strengthening trainer" working with me. ***(Editor's note: Mosley is referring to Hudson, who he won't mention by name.)*** That's when I looked my worst. I throw that out. When I left my assistant trainer, the knockouts started coming back. So maybe he wasn't helping me too much with the strength.

The Ring: Let's talk about the BALCO situation. The ...

SM: That's something that really can't be talked about because there's still a lawsuit that Judd Burstein is working on now.

The Ring: That's the suit against Victor Conte?

SM: Victor Conte, yeah. Honestly, I definitely want to talk about it, but there's money involved, and lawsuits, so I'd rather not. There's probably a lot of money that's on the line, and Judd will be very angry at you and everyone else if we talk about it.

The Ring: Okay. Then answer the questions you can answer. Have you ever knowingly used performance-enhancing drugs? Your grand jury testimony ...

SM: You know what? We're going to end it right now. I'm not able to talk about it. It's so ridiculous to me. It's so crazy to me. What was it, 2003? It's so stupid.

The Ring: Why it's significant is because people are still very interested in knowing what happened. Fans want to learn the names of Major League Baseball players who used performance-enhancing drugs, even if we're finding out that they used them back in 2002 or 2003.

SM: I'm one of the cleanest fighters out there. The problem is that different guys come into your camp and try to make you better. That's why I feel for Margarito. He had guys saying, "C'mon, you're all right, this is just protecting your hands." You have all these different guys [in a fighter's camp] doing the wrong stuff. And they try to put the blame on the athlete. I would never tell anybody to try [performance enhancing drugs]. It's the stupidest thing ever. Boxing is a mental sport. So it's not like I was ever sitting around looking for stuff to make me stronger.

I really want to talk about it, but I choose not to because I don't want it to be the focal point of THE RING magazine. It's not something that needs to be put out there anymore. It's dead and done. It's overdone now.

The Ring: It is not dead and done if people are still talking about A-Rod all these years after he supposedly used steroids.

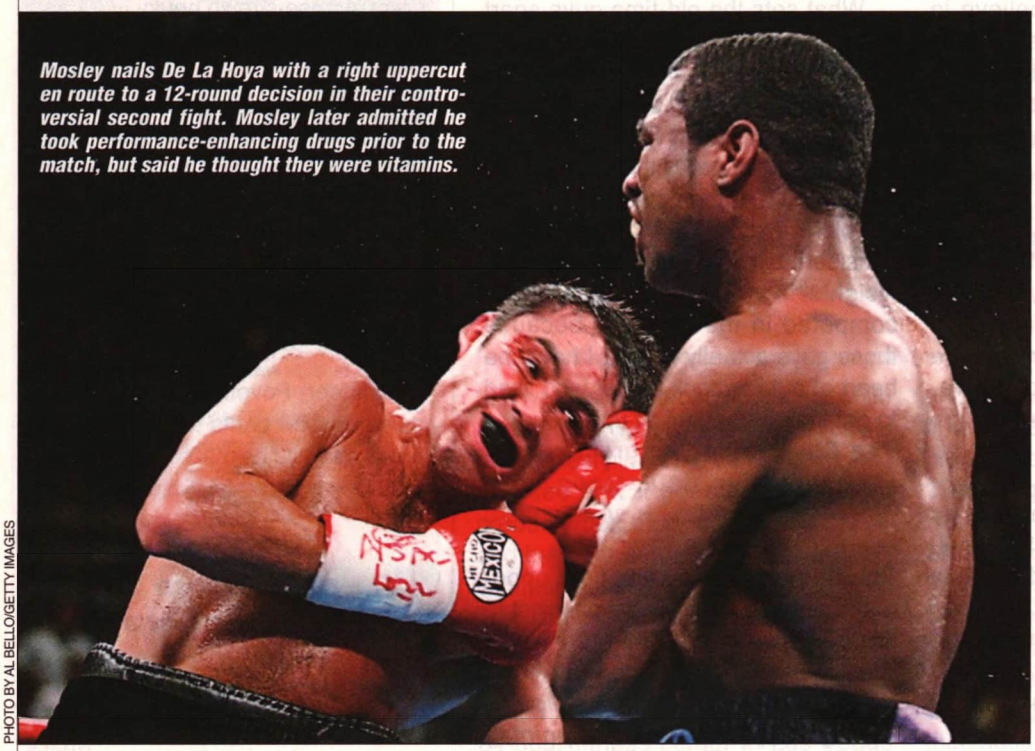
SM: They're always going to talk about A-Rod, this one, that one.

The Ring: You've said in a previous interview that you used steroids unknowingly. So it wasn't a case of you seeking an advantage, it was more a case of a trainer coming to you and suggesting that you try something?

SM: Not suggesting, but bringing me to a person and telling me, "This is a guy that works with everybody with vitamins and all that stuff." And that he'll help me. I'm saying, "No, no, I'm good. I can beat anybody. I don't need vitamins or all that stuff." What makes me mad is that I'm like, "No, leave me alone. I'm a real fighter. I'm shredded." But after, "C'mon, c'mon, c'mon, c'mon, c'mon," I'm like, "All right, whatever." I feel like I'm set up. But I don't want to be linked to talk about steroids. [Conte] is going to be caught in all these different lies, so let Judd do his thing. Steroids and me do not mix. They don't mix.

The Ring: Isn't the athlete ultimately responsible for what goes into his body?

SM: Kind of.



Mosley nails De La Hoya with a right uppercut en route to a 12-round decision in their controversial second fight. Mosley later admitted he took performance-enhancing drugs prior to the match, but said he thought they were vitamins.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

"I feel like I'm set up. But I don't want to be linked to talk about steroids. [Conte] is going to be caught in all these different lies, so let Judd [Burstein] do his thing. Steroids and me do not mix. They don't mix."

The Ring: Nobody can talk you into taking heroin if you don't want to take it.

SM: But if you don't know if it's heroin or not, if you think it's Vitamin A or B or something that's supposed to be helping you out …

The Ring: Conte has said that you absolutely knew you were taking steroids.

SM: That's why we're in court right now.

The Ring: You took the performance-enhancing drugs before your rematch with Oscar. Have you two ever discussed this?

SM: We talked a little bit about it, and you've seen in his book that he knows what type of person I am.

The Ring: Are you a Hall of Famer?

SM: Of course.

The Ring: Make the case.

SM: Lightweight champion with all eight title defenses by knockout. At one

time, I was 38-0 with 35 wins by knockout. Junior middleweight champion, welterweight champion. And I beat another Hall of Famer, Oscar De La Hoya, twice.

The Ring: If you used performance-enhancing drugs, whether you were aware you were doing so or not, should that disqualify you from Hall of Fame consideration?

SM: No, I don't think so. Like I said, in my past fights with that certain trainer—even in the second Oscar fight, I didn't look as good as I did the first time. I'm actually fighting better now, older, than I did when I was younger. Taking that into consideration, I don't think [performance enhancing drugs] have anything to do with heart and determination and performance in the ring.

The Ring: Why do fighters use the stuff if it doesn't help them in battle?

SM: Because you have strengthening coaches that think they can make you better, even though they're making you worse. I heard baseball players talking about that on TV. They said it's all about timing and ability to hit the ball. If a guy can't hit the ball, nothing is going to help him.

The Ring: Who's the best fighter you've ever faced?

SM: That's hard to say. I think the Oscar that I fought the first time. We were both sharp and hungry and all-around talented. He was a champion who was very fast and had power.

The Ring: You're not just sucking up to the boss, are you?

SM: *(Laughs)* No, no.

The Ring: What exactly is your role with Golden Boy Promotions?

SM: I'll be going out and scouting fighters in amateur tournaments. Right now, I talk with the younger fighters, like Victor Ortiz. I don't train them, but I talk to them, give advice, and help them out, kind of like a big brother.

The Ring: Who in boxing gets on your nerves? Any particular fighters, managers, reporters, round card girls?

SM: *(Laughs)* The round card girls definitely don't get on my nerves. No fighters do either. Sometimes when the media starts writing things that aren't true, that gets on my nerves. This whole BALCO thing is getting on my nerves. What's good about my lawyer, Judd, is that he was there with me when all this stuff was taking place. So he knows [Conte] is lying.

The Ring: What are your proudest moment and your biggest regret?

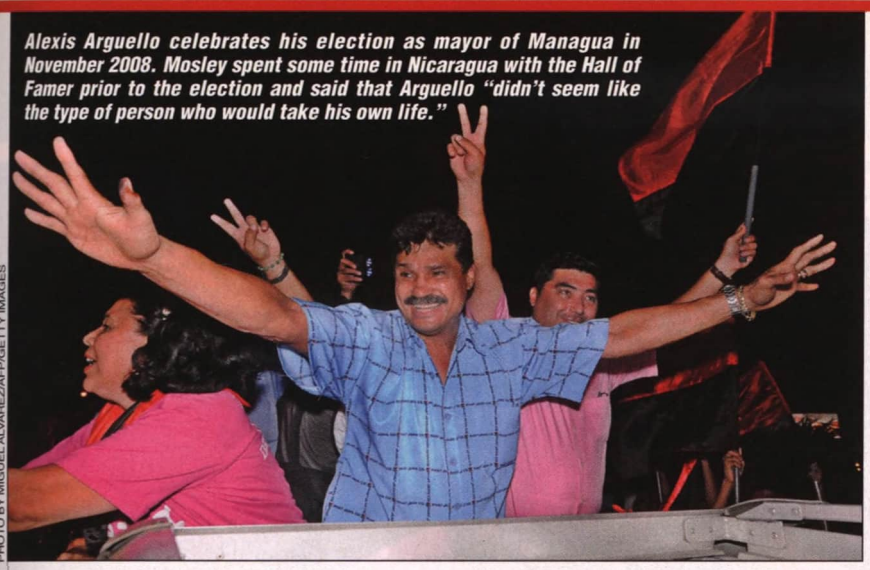
SM: My proudest moment is winning my first belt, the lightweight title. My biggest regret is, obviously, that BALCO scandal.

The Ring: Is there anyplace where you haven't fought that you wish you could?

SM: No, I've been pretty happy with Las Vegas and California, where I've been fighting. Those are the places I love.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Mosley shares the podium with Golden Boy Promotions colleagues Bernard Hopkins and De La Hoya. Shane describes his role with the company as talent scout and big brother to some of the younger fighters. It is clear, however, that the role he enjoys the most is that of a fighter.



Alexis Arguello celebrates his election as mayor of Managua in November 2008. Mosley spent some time in Nicaragua with the Hall of Famer prior to the election and said that Arguello "didn't seem like the type of person who would take his own life."

PHOTO BY MIGUEL ALVAREZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The Ring: What matchup would you most like to see right now?

SM: I'd pay to see Pacquiao-Mayweather.

The Ring: If you were the Czar of Boxing, and you could implement three changes in the game, what would they be?

SM: Boxing is the greatest sport, so there's not a lot to change. I guess one change is that the best fighters would *have to* fight each other in every division, no matter how they went about making that happen. Also, writers would have to talk better about fighters and say less negative things. It would be better for the outside world to know the good side of boxers. The third change would be that fighters get the bulk of the money, not the promoters.

The Ring: What do you think of the super middleweight tournament Showtime is hosting?

SM: Two years is a long time for a tournament to last. Can't they have a bracket where they have guys fight every other month? That's a long time to wait for an ending.

The Ring: Give us your thoughts on the recent suicide of Alexis Arguello and the murder of Arturo Gatti. Did you know those guys?

SM: Yeah. My nanny is Nicaraguan and her husband and daughters are back in Nicaragua, so I went down there to help out the family. When I went there, I spent a lot of time with Alexis Arguello, driving around. He was the mayor of Managua and was very happy and outgoing. Everybody loved him. He didn't seem like the type of person who would take his own life. He drove me about 100 miles in a Toyota truck. We went to dinner and he told me how impressed he was with me as a fighter, and how much he respected my boxing skills. It was just before I fought [the Nicaraguan] Mayorga and he was telling me a little bit about Mayorga and his reputation. We hung out. It meant a lot to me. Aaron Pryor also spoke well about the fighter that I am.

I knew Gatti, but we never really hung out or anything like that. Every time I talked to him at press conferences, he was a real person and a real stand-up guy, a genuine person. He seemed like a lot of fun, very likable.

The Ring: It took big balls to carry around the "Sugar" nickname in the aftermath of Sugar Ray Robinson and Sugar Ray Leonard and all that they meant to the sport. Do you think you've honored the nickname?

SM: Leonard told me how proud he was of me when I fought Margarito, and that I carried the name very well. That nickname was given to me when I was like 10 years old. Even when I was an amateur, they introduced me as "Sugar Shane Mosley." That was my name from Day One. It's come all the way with me.

The Ring: It's a big responsibility.

SM: I've lived up to it. ■

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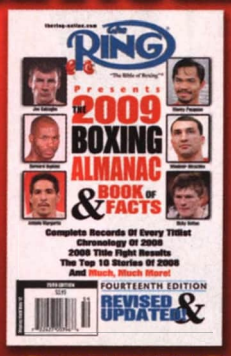

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Most fans know Johnson as an undefeated heavyweight prospect who spends almost as much time spouting off as he does punching. But underneath the braggadocio is a loving single father who is laying it all on the line to provide a good life for his daughter, Fatimah.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KEVIN JOHNSON

Heavyweight Kevin Johnson's Secret Weapon:

AN ANGEL IN HIS CORNER

By Michael Bradley

When Kevin Johnson looks at his 10-year-old daughter, he thinks about options. About opportunities. About no matter how much she likes soccer, she's going to ballet class. About how no matter how much she enjoys watching the heavyweight title contender train, spar, and knock people down, she's not stepping into the ring herself. About how she's going to finish high school and four years of college, and then receive a "platinum package." About how he had none of these choices when he was growing up.

Johnson may be a big, bad man who can huff and puff with the best of them and then blow the whole house down, but his true calling isn't in the ring. It's as a parent, and after spending more than

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Referee Earl Morton moves between Johnson and Devin Vargas, who had just been knocked down during a May 2009 bout in Atlantic City. Vargas suffered his first loss when "Kingpin" stopped him in the sixth round.

a year fighting to get Fatimah back in his life, he isn't about to let her fall prey to any of the things that sidetracked him.

So, although Johnson claims to have "13 personalities," the dominant voice is that of the single father who is there every day with his daughter. As he climbs the ladder of championship hopefuls, seemingly stronger every fight and anxious to stake his claim against the world's best, Johnson understands that no matter how much a belt might mean to him, nothing in his life is more important than Fatimah and his mission to be the best father he can be. Even on the days when things seem too much, Johnson keeps going, never wondering how he ended up in this position.

"When you ask, 'Why?' God will answer you, and you don't want to know the answer," he said. "God always gives you what you can handle. If you try to change, you're going to miss what He has in store for you next."

Johnson has every reason to believe the Almighty has plenty ahead for him. Parenting is always a road with plenty of twists and turns. And given the recent success he has had in the boxing ring, it's possible his vocation could take him to some pretty exciting places. For someone who spent time in the joint, didn't pick up his sport of choice until he was 18, and has survived a bitter custody battle, you would imagine a nice, easy ride would be pretty appealing.

That would mean you don't know much about Kevin Johnson.

This is a man who has come further in his life than he has in the ring, and as his 22-0-1 (9) record might indicate, he has already made some strides as a fighter. While he tries to climb the heavyweight rankings, he remains committed to Fatimah, whose mother died after an accident early this decade. Some days, it seems he needs every one of those 13 personas to handle everything he has to do, from promoting himself—and boy, can he do that—to getting ready to fight, to dealing with the demands of Fatimah, and trying to set himself up financially for life so that he can be a hospital volunteer after his career of trying to send people to the infirmary ends.

In other words, Johnson enjoys his busy life and doesn't care what anybody thinks about him. If you want to be a part of his team, great. If not, he has something for you too. Big brother Brian said his younger sibling might be a little too patient with people, but you don't want to be around when that patience runs out.

"Depending on what I'm dealing with, that's what my personality is," Kevin said. "There are some people who come after me, the haters and critics, but none of them know the real Kevin Johnson. If you're hating me, I have hate for you. If you criticize me, I criticize you. But if you respect me, you'll get respect."

Like most men who spend time in jail, Johnson emerged a different person. He was humbled. He was remorseful. And he wanted to rearrange his priorities and his life. Johnson spent 18 months in jail for providing a glimpse of just what he could do with his fists. When he stepped between the ropes as a fighter, Johnson was subject to the rules of the sport. When he encountered a man in Essex County, New Jersey, one night, there were no rules, just the law.

"I got into a bad streetfight and did some bad harm to a person," he said, repentance clear in his voice.

Johnson was fighting as an amateur at the time, and when he left prison, he decided he wanted more—more as a fighter and more as a parent. The trouble was, he couldn't find his daughter. Her mother was in a coma after the accident, and Fatimah had moved in with her mom's family, who would gain custody after Fatimah's mother died.

"For a while, I thought that was the best thing, because of my training and traveling," Johnson said.

That opinion changed quickly.

"I realized no one can do it better than a child's mother or father," he said.

Therefore, he decided to become the same man he was in the ring and take the necessary shots to get custody. If you think a few rounds in the ring can be rough, imagine what it's like for a man just out of prison to navigate the legal system in search of a full-time job with his daughter. That's one position a parole officer isn't going to be accepting as gainful employment.

So, Johnson went to work. Or, rather, David Bensoussan went to work. The real estate broker befriended Johnson and put together a plan that would get him back in position to make a strong case for custody. At the time, Johnson was working in the real estate world because amateur boxing didn't exactly pay for groceries. Bensoussan hired an attorney and helped Johnson take the necessary steps to get Fatimah into his life full-time.

"First thing we had to do was get my money right," Johnson said. "The second thing was to get my living quarters straight. Then we had to get my career going. After that, I would get custody.

"Everything happened like he said it would."

But it wasn't easy. No way. If you're wondering why Johnson said he's willing to take anything fired at him in the ring, consider the anguish he went through during the custody fight. "That took a lot out of him," Brian said. "It cost him a lot of money, time, and energy. He put a lot of himself into that."

As you can imagine, the opposing side highlighted his prison record. They described him as an unfit parent. Here was a father who wanted to raise his child, and people were saying he wasn't worthy to do so. Next to that, even the most devastating right hand is nothing.

"It was a battle, especially for a guy just coming out of prison," Johnson said. "Lies get told. But it was worth it."

Johnson's quest wasn't born out of pride or a desire to covet "what was his." He wanted to be a full-time parent, despite the incredible sacrifice that entailed. Growing up, he had been raised by his mother, a minister, and grandmother—"She was my father," he said about grandma—and learned what it took to do the job. By the time he won custody, in 2001, he knew exactly what to do and how much work it took to finish the job. All day. Every day. Single parenting is not for the weak of stomach. There are precious few breaks. Don't feel good when you wake up? Too bad. It's time to make breakfast. Too tired to help with homework? Drink some coffee and start those math problems. Rather watch the game than shuttle

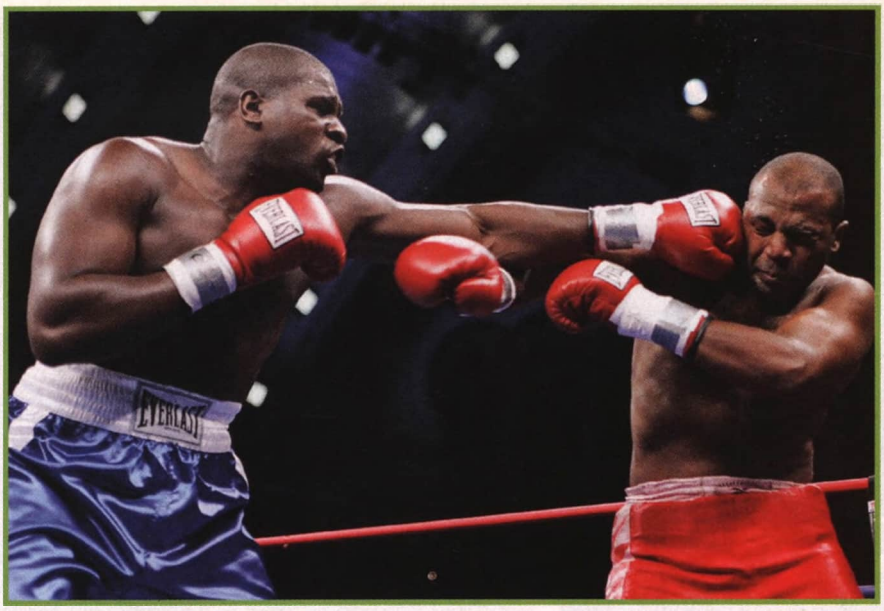
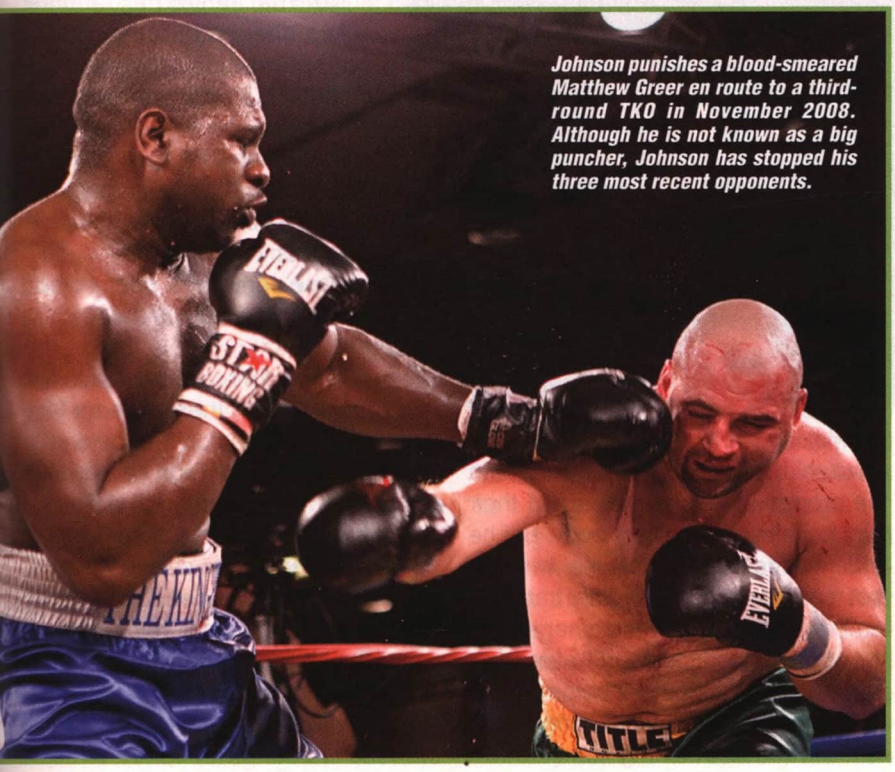


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Johnson pops Daniel Bispo with a jab en route to a shutout decision in June 2006. It was Johnson's first 10-rounder and he took every round on all three scorecards.



Johnson punishes a blood-smeared Matthew Greer en route to a third-round TKO in November 2008. Although he is not known as a big puncher, Johnson has stopped his three most recent opponents.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Former WBA heavyweight titleholder Bruce Seldon is on the receiving end of Johnson's exceptional left jab during a September 2008 match that ended in the fifth round when the fight was stopped to save Seldon from additional punishment.

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

your child to practice/ballet/play dates/anything? Get off your backside and do it. Oh, and get ready for more of the same tomorrow, tough guy.

"I came from a family that showed me I can do it," he said. "It's embedded in me. Knowing how to raise a child is easy, although not by yourself."

Johnson is not a perfect father. For instance, he can't cook.

"Making tea is a challenge for him," Brian said, laughing. So, he makes sure the proper, nutritious meals find their way to Fatimah's growing body. But he understands the value of time, whether that means letting his daughter train with him, or taking her and the other kids in the neighborhood to school—every day. And he's always ready for homework.

"One of the most interesting sights in the world is watching him sit down with Fatimah and to do homework," Brian said. "He didn't finish school himself, so it's almost like he's reliving school through her."

Johnson talks with Fatimah. He impresses the value of education on her. And he discusses those options, the better to make sure she understands that everything is available to her and that she will be expected to take it.

In no way is Johnson upset about his profession. He loves to fight and is well equipped physically and mentally to handle its rigors. He's not on an "I want better than this for you" kick with Fatimah. Rather, he wants her to have the choices that he didn't. Wants her to avoid the pain he went through finding his way back to her. Even if Johnson holds every championship belt available, he won't have a title more important than "Dad."

"He's a very meticulous father," Brian said. "If you look at every other aspect of his life, he's not as meticulous. But he's very protective and takes care of her very well."

Not that raising a daughter isn't a challenge, even for the toughest man. In many ways, Johnson is in alien territory. And if he thinks the first decade has been challenging, just wait until he's living with a teenager.

"She's just like me," he said. "She has 13 personalities, but I can see some new ones coming as she gets older. She's 10 going on 35."

When Johnson decided to turn pro, in 2003, there was no jam-packed press conference and no lead story on ESPN. Didn't even make the ticker. Why should it? He was a guy whose biggest success during a 14-2 amateur career was a victory in the New Jersey Golden Gloves tourney. It's not as if he entered the ring at age 18 with fanfare either. He began boxing, because being 6'3" and 150 pounds wasn't exactly working for him with the ladies.

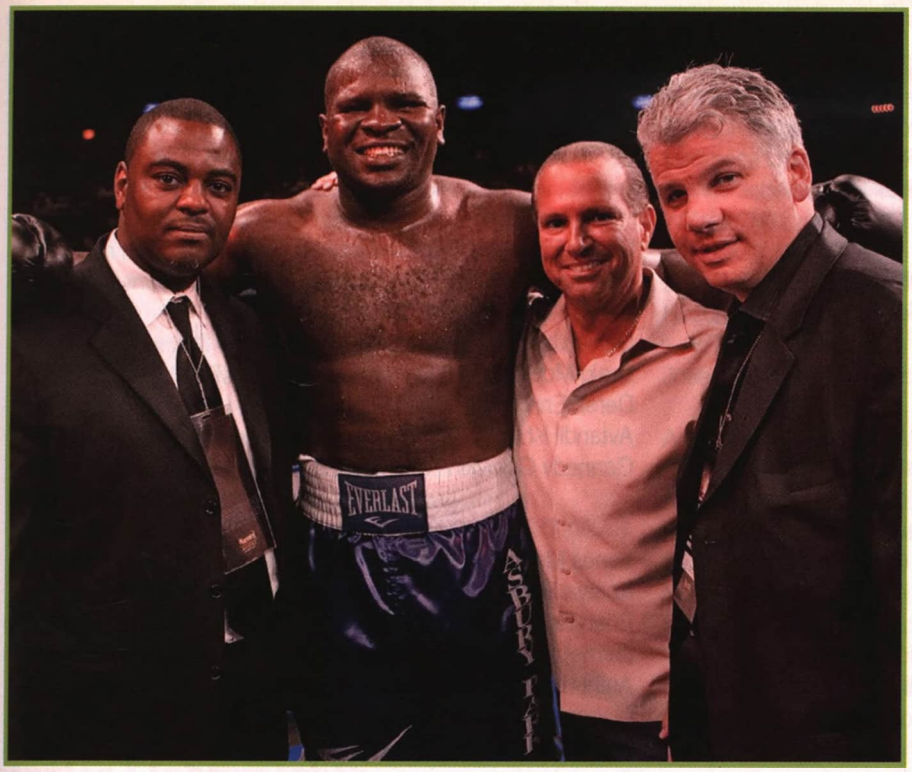


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Johnson poses (from left to right) with his older brother, Brian, friend Greg Fratto, and promoter Joe DeGuardia following the Vargas victory. "I am confident that Kevin Johnson is the future world heavyweight champion," said DeGuardia.

"Women like those tall, dark, and handsome guys," he said, laughing. "They don't go for skinny, dark, and handsome."

Johnson developed quickly as an amateur and gained his experience in the gym by sparring with professional heavyweights and applying the lessons learned.

After losing in the national Golden Gloves tourney, Johnson was faced with a choice. He could turn professional or try out for the Olympics. The way he looked at it, if you could fight, it didn't matter whether you were part of an Olympic team or just a corner gym. Plus, he didn't think the sport's political side would favor him. He wasn't well connected, just a guy from Jersey with a helluva jab. So, Johnson started fighting for money. On February 13, 2003, he stopped Stanford Brisbone at the Days Inn in Allentown, Pennsylvania. It wasn't quite Madison Square Garden, but it was a successful start.

From there, Johnson fought his way through the underbelly of the heavyweight division, staggering only once, during a four-round draw against Timor Ibragimov in just his fourth fight, in June, 2004, in Laughlin, Nevada. On the way to his undefeated record, Johnson has shown the ability to jab well, a propensity for slipping punches, and an improved capacity for closing out fights. After a string of 10 decisions in 11 fights (he knocked out Curtis Taylor in March 2007), Johnson has stopped his last three opponents. His most recent victory, over previously undefeated Devin Vargas in Atlantic City, went six of a scheduled 10 rounds and featured a battering that gave some hope that Johnson was rounding into a more complete fighter.

"He has decided that he wants to punch now," Brian said, not too happy that his brother doesn't mind taking some punishment while meting out his own. Johnson, of course, believes he's becoming the total package.

"I got my speed and defense from Floyd Mayweather, my hand movement and artistic side from Roy Jones, my agility and eye-hand coordination from Muhammad Ali, and my jab and the ability to set people up from Larry Holmes," he said.

Not bad, *eh*? Of course, the man they call "Kingpin" might be exaggerating a bit. In a heavyweight division that has failed to capture our imagination for more than a decade, he remains on the outskirts, although Brian said they turned down a chance to fight Ruslan Chagaev earlier this year because the deal was one-sided. Johnson predicts he'll fight for a title in the next year, although he needs to knock another opponent or two out before someone will deem him worthy of a big-time look. Not to worry, Johnson said; he'll get there. And when he does, watch out. Wladimir Klitschko? "Just tap that jaw," Johnson said.

And the punishment that is sure to come in a heavyweight fight? "I'm willing to take a bomb, missiles, and an AK-47," Johnson said. "If he shoots one, I'm shooting three. I'm the most feared heavyweight out there."

No one knows whether Johnson will ever get a title shot, although Brian said more people are willing to fight him, thanks to his recent success. Whether he has a chance at a belt is up to his skills and the vagaries of matchmaking, which do not always follow conventional paths or the wishes of heavyweight contenders.

What we can be certain of is Johnson's commitment to Fatimah, who as she grows will challenge her father like only a teenager can. She'll keep going to school, continue playing sports, discovering new avenues, and making every minute of her father's hard work worthwhile. And when she graduates from college—and she *will* graduate—Johnson promises that "platinum" reward.

"Ten-million dollars, a house, and a car," he said.

Whoa! Johnson has a plan to make that nut, but it would help if that title shot came quickly. If you have Klitschko's phone number, get it down to Atlanta. Kevin Johnson's ready to make the call.

After homework, of course. ■

Michael Bradley is freelance writer based in suburban Philadelphia.

Summary

Heavyweights
Eddie Chambers W 12 Alexander Dimitrenko
Lance Whitaker W 10 Danny Batchelder
Shabani Tampa D 10 Amour Amran
Samuel Peter KO 3 Marcus McGee
Fres Oquendo KO 9 Bruce Seldon
Fres Oquendo KO 3 Mark Brown
Tyson Fury KO 3 Aleksandrs Selezens
Tor Hamer KO 1 Marcus Dickerson
Denis Bakhtov KO 1 Steffen Kretschmann

Cruiserweights
Tomasz Adamek KO 4 Bobby Gunn
(Retains World Championship; IBF Title)
Steve Cunningham W 12 Wayne Braithwaite
Matt Godfrey W 10 Shawn Hawk
Grigory Drozd KO 10 Darnell Wilson
Denis Lebedev KO 3 Enzo Maccarinelli
Jonny Walker W 12 Yoshinori Nishizawa
Enad Licina W 12 Ignacio Esparza
Tomas Rodriguez D 10 Manuel Banquez
Nadjib Mohammedi KO 7 Jose Tavares
Rachid El Hadak KO 8 Julien Perriaux
Chris Henry KO 6 Shaun George
Ran Nakash KO 4 William Bailey

Light Heavyweights
Doudou Ngumbu W 12 Charles Chisamba
Thomas Oosthuizen W 10 Jared Lovett
Jesse Brinkley W 10 Mike Paschall
Nathan Cleverly KO 7 Danny McIntosh
Tony Oakey KO 4 Shon Davies
David Telesco KO 2 William Gill
Mark Tucker W 10 Rubin Williams

Super Middleweights
Zulfikar Ali W 10 Miki Ropati
Francisco Mora D 10 Matias Franco
Medhi Bouadla KO 9 Anthony Prunier
Billy Joe Saunders KO 2 Matt Scriven
Lennox Allen KO 2 Leon Gilkes
Natascha Ragosina W 10 Laura Ramsey

Middleweights
Arthur Abraham KO 10 Mahir Oral
(Retains IBF Title)
Felix Sturm W 12 Khoren Gevor
(Retains WBA Title)
Sebastian Zbik W 12 Domenico Spada
Sebastian Sylvester W 12 Lajuan Simon
Dmitry Pirog W 12 Kofi Jantuah
Hassan N'Jikam KO 10 Gennady Martirosyan
Lukas Konecny KO 8 Christophe Karagoz
Daniel Jacobs KO 8 George Walton
Craig McEwan W 8 Darnell Boone
Derek Ennis W 8 John Mackey
Avtandil Khurtsidze KO 5 Jamel Bahki
Gennady Golovkin KO 2 John Carvalho

Junior Middleweights
Vanes Martirosyan KO 6 Andrey Tsurkan
Kostya Rovenskiy W 10 Tursunbay Abdullakimov
Brian Rose W 8 Francis Tchoffo
Jermell Charlo KO 8 Frederico Flores Jr.
Anthony Small KO 8 Matthew Hall
Mohamad Abdulaev W 6 Sergey Starkov
Erislandy Lara W 6 Darnell Boone

Welterweights
Lovemore N'dou W 12 Phillip N'dou
Ivan Kirpa W 12 Miguel Rodriguez
Krzysztof Bienias KO 12 Sven Paris
Bethuel Ushona W 12 Welcome Ntshingila
Viktor Plotnikov W 12 Sherzodbek Alimjanov
Leonard Bundu W 12 Frank Shabani
Selcuk Aydin KO 9 Jackson Bonsu
Motoki Sasaki Tech. Win 7 Dexter Delada
Gianluca Branco W 6 Janos Petrovics

Junior Welterweights
Amir Khan W 12 Andriy Kotelnik
(Wins WBA Title)
Miguel Vazquez W 10 Breidis Prescott

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Junior middleweight Vanes Martirosyan plows a right into Andrey Tsurkan

Marcos Maidana KO 6 Victor Ortiz
Souleymane M'baye W 12 Colin Lynes
Mike Arnaoutis W 10 Doel Carrasquillo
Paul Spadafora KO 6 Ivan Bustos
Tom Glover W 8 Jonathan Thaxton
Steven Wills KO 6 Pratet Sor Thanikul
Ali Chebah KO 5 Fidel Munoz
Frankie Gavin KO 2 Graham Fearn

Lightweights

Paulus Moses W 12 Takehiro Shimada
(Retains WBA Title)
Miguel Acosta KO 9 Urbano Antillon
Antonio DeMarco KO 9 Anges Adjaho
Anthony Mezaache W 12 Andrei Kudriavtsev
Adrien Broner KO 6 William Kickett
Tsukasa Takase KO 5 Laimangkorn Chuwatana
Yoshitaka Kato W 8 Kazuyoshi Kumano
Jatoorora Tjingaveta KO 7 Paulus Petrus
Rustam Nugaev KO 6 Orlando Membreno
Decha Bankluaygym KO 3 Michael Sigarlaki
Dmitry Ganiev KO 3 Sapapetch Sakaorat

Junior Lightweights

Jorge Linares KO 8 Josafat Perez
(Retains WBA Title)
Francisco Cordero W 10 Koseki Nakama
Vicente Rodriguez D 10 Claudio Tapia
Didier Basulto KO 8 Miguel Hernandez
Kevin Mitchell KO 8 Rudy Encarnacion
Takashi Miura KO 7 Yoshimitsu Yashiro

Featherweights

Elio Rojas W 12 Takahiro Aoh
(Wins WBC Title)
Cristobal Cruz W 12 Jorge Solis
(Retains IBF Title)
Antonio Escalante W 10 Cornelius Lock
Ricardo Castillo W 10 Antonio Torres
Ryol Li Lee W 10 Hiroyuki Enoki
Andrey Isaev W 12 Chaiyong Sithsaithong
Lorenzo Villanueva KO 10 Eric Canoy
Uriel Barrera KO 6 Wendell Codere
Sergio Santillan KO 6 Diego Ramirez
Choi Tseveenpurev KO 3 Lubos Priehradnik

Junior Featherweights

Juan Manuel Lopez KO 9 Olivier Lontchi
Steve Molitor W 12 Heriberto Ruiz
Jorge Romero W 12 Hugo Partida
Martin Castillo KO 1 Alfredo Montano
Daniel Sassou W 12 Arsen Martirosyan
Alexander Munoz W 10 Breilor Teran
Francisco Leal W 10 Guadalupe Hernandez
Jose Jimenez W 10 Luis Guzman
Luis Valdez W 10 Rafael Gutierrez
Massimo Deidda W 10 Ciro Pariso
Malcolm Tunacao W 8 Takuto Nanba
Victor Terrazas KO 7 Filomeno Jaramillo
Hiromasa Ohashi KO 7 Rolly Lunas
Esther Schouten KO 10 Bettina Voelker
Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. KO 2 Cecilio Santos

Bantamweights

Hozumi Hasegawa KO 1 Nestor Rocha
(Retains WBC Title)
Joseph Agbeko W 12 Vic Darchinyan
(Retains IBF Title)
Anselmo Moreno W 12 Mahyar Monshipour
(Retains WBA Title)
Simpiwe Vetyeka W 12 Eric Barcelona
Kohei Ohba W 10 Akira Umano
Sebastian Rodriguez KO 9 Santos Marimon
Nobuto Ikehara Tech. Win 8 Kenji Niwa
Sasha Bakhtine KO 8 Richard Samosir
Thangthong Kiattaweesuk KO 4 Bogie Delada
Klaas Mboyane KO 4 Cleutus Mbhele
Sylvester Lopez KO 3 Noel Sungahid
Leon Moore KO 2 Dexter Marques

Junior Bantamweights

Hernan Marquez W 10 Juan Esquer
Jorge Arce KO 3 Fernando Lumacad
Juan Rosas W 10 Alejandro Martinez
Tomas Rojas KO 9 Everardo Morales
Rodrigo Guerrero W 8 Luis Maldonado
Lee Haskins KO 4 Ross Burkinshaw

Flyweights

Omar Narvaez KO 11 Omar Soto
Cesar Canchila KO 5 Carlos Campos
Juan Rosas W10 Alejandro Martinez
Julius Alcos W 10 Edwin Picardal
Eric Diaz Siregar W 10 Yudi Arema
Darwin Zamora KO 9 Marlon Pineda
Rey Migreno KO 5 Ratanapol Sor Vorapin

Junior Flyweights

Giovanni Segura KO 6 Juanito Rubillar
(Retains WBA Title)
Wisanu Pornobnum W 11 Donnie Mabao
Hernan Marquez W10 Juan Esquer
Tommy Seran KO 10 Decky Putra
Esmeralda Moreno W 10 Anahi Torres
Nanako Kikuchi W 10 Kayoko Ebata

Strawweights

Roman Gonzalez W 12 Katsunari Takayama
(Retains WBA Title)
Nkosinathi Joyi W 12 Florante Condes
Wanheng Menayothin W 10 Roel Lagonero
Akira Yaegashi W 10 Kenichi Horikawa

Arthur Abraham KO 10 Mahir Oral

Berlin, Germany: With no agreement in place to challenge world middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik, the 29-year-old Abraham, 159½, Berlin, Germany, via Yerevan, Armenia, completed his inevitable crushing of the game but outclassed Oral, 158¾, Hamburg, Germany, to retain the IBF middleweight title for the 11th time at the O2 World Arena. Abraham immediately made it known that he would be moving up to super middleweight to compete in the "Super Six" round-robin tournament. His first opponent will be former middleweight champion Jermain Taylor on October 10 in Berlin.

Oral had put together an unbeaten run stretching back to 2004, when he was outpointed in a six-rounder after consecutive draws, but the lack of firepower and world-class opposition on his record was ruthlessly exposed by Abraham, 30-0 (24). In not atypical fashion, "King Arthur" kept his sword in its sheath and allowed Oral to make most of the moves in the opening three rounds. The German challenger utilized his jab and speed to seize the advantage, but the suspicion that he would be overrun just as soon as Abraham began to take matters into his own hands was proved right when Oral was hurt and knocked down for the first time by a series of right hands and a hard left hook to the jaw in round four.

Oral, 25-2-2 (10), went down again after taking a right hand to the head in the fifth, but American referee Earl Brown ruled it a slip. Another legitimate knockdown followed in the sixth when Abraham softened Oral with a one-two and floored him with a right to the jaw. The challenger refused to submit, holding off Abraham's attack for three more rounds. But as he tired visibly in the 10th, he fell first from a combination of body and head shots and twice more from a sustained assault before referee Brown waved it over at the 1:23 mark just as Oral's corner prepared to throw in the towel.

"He can really punch hard," Oral said. "I tried to remain on my feet, but I could only see stars in my head."

Abraham expressed regret that his compelling credentials at middleweight had failed to secure a showdown with Pavlik, but he is looking forward to the challenge of establishing himself as the main man at super middleweight. "It is about time for a new challenge," he declared. "It was a lot of fun to fight at middleweight, but since neither [WBA titleholder] Felix Sturm nor [RING world champion] Kelly Pavlik wanted to get in the ring with me, I had to move on. Now I want to become the best boxer in the super middleweight division and I really look forward to making even bigger fights in the future."

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Wilfried Sauerland**
(6-27-09)
Brian Doogan

PHOTO BY MATTHIAS KERN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Abraham drills Oral with a right in final middleweight defense

Jean Pascal W 12 Adrian Diaconu

Montreal, Quebec: The bout between Pascal, 174¼, and Diaconu, 173½, at the Bell Centre marked the latest in a long history of Montreal boxing rivalries, where traditionally an Anglophone was pitted against a Francophone for ownership of the city's bragging rights. While the locals have embraced both, Pascal, who has lived in Montreal for most of his life, was born in Haiti, and Romania-born Diaconu has fought there since 2001. As far as traditional rivalries went, neither fighter exactly fit the mold.

Still, the fight promised to be a good one, with each fighter a proven world-class pugilist in the prime of his career. Diaconu came in undefeated and

possessing the WBC light heavyweight title, while Pascal entered with a single loss, in a thrilling fight against Carl Froch six months earlier. There was more at stake than just regional pride, and this was the first time two "Canadian" fighters were vying for a major alphabet title on Canadian soil.

With 13,659 fans in attendance, the 26-year-old Pascal staged an impressive, fast-paced boxing clinic to score a unanimous decision win over Diaconu, 31. And now that Pascal holds an alphabet strap, a showdown against Montreal-based super middleweight beltholder Lucian Bute, a Romanian stablemate of Diaconu's, seems likely and is guaranteed to generate monstrous numbers at the gate.

The flamboyant Pascal entered the fight with more respect than ever from the boxing community after his brave and close effort against Froch. Up to that point, it was questioned whether Pascal truly possessed heart or was simply another fighter with flash but no substance. Against Diaconu, he showed plenty of both, boxing and moving laterally in the early rounds while jabbing and hammering lightning shots to the body to build an early lead.

Standing only 5'9", it was obvious that the slower Diaconu's challenge would be to close the distance. But he maintained remarkable patience, fighting with controlled aggression while attempting to time Pascal with counters on the belief that he possessed the superior knockout power. As the fight unfolded, Diaconu unloaded combinations whenever the gap closed, but found his attack frustrated by Pascal's quick head movement and propensity to clinch on the inside.

Early in the fifth, a sharp left-right by Pascal dumped Diaconu, who looked more shocked than hurt. A follow-up combination dropped Diaconu to his knees for a second time, although referee Marlon Wright (Canada) called it a slip. While not able to score a knockout, Pascal was nonetheless starting to look as though he was pulling away.

Seconds later, however, Diaconu landed an overhand right—his best punch of the match—sending Pascal turning into the ropes with his legs dancing spastically as the crowd let out a deafening roar. A shaken Pascal smothered Diaconu, who chopped away on the inside but never found

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Joseph Agbeko

Maybe Joseph Agbeko shouldn't have been the underdog. He was the bigger man, the defending titlist, in his prime at age 29, and if not for a questionable decision in Germany five years ago, he would still be undefeated.

But Agbeko was the underdog anyway. And it was because his opponent was Vic Darchinyan, the trash-talking knockout artist who'd looked spectacular in his previous three fights and had crashed most pound-for-pound lists. So Darchinyan was the betting favorite, while Agbeko was an afterthought in the minds of some.

In his own mind, though, Agbeko was never the underdog, and he took Darchinyan out of his game by tagging him with several hard left hooks in the opening round. It wasn't a flawless performance; "King Kong" was sloppy, but it was an effective performance, resulting in a clear-cut decision win (the 116-111 scorecard was much closer to reality than the 114-113 tallies) that knocked a pound-for-pounder down quite a few pegs.

When all is said and done, Agbeko's win wasn't sensational enough to make him Darchinyan's replacement on the P-4-P list. But it certainly was strong enough to make him the Fighter of the Month.

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

the space to deliver another debilitating blow before the bell sounded.

Clear-headed but chastened, the athletically gifted Pascal controlled the action in the ensuing middle rounds by adopting a style reminiscent of Roy Jones. He cut Diaconu in round seven by pasting him with zipping, long-range shots, he tied him up on the inside, and he otherwise let his legs carry him away from the danger of any sustained exchanges.

Diaconu, 26-1 (15), rallied to take round 10 and rocked Pascal again with a right hand in the 11th. But Pascal's hair-trigger punching from the periphery, along with an overall command of the tempo, locked down the last heat and the decision for him.

In the end, judge John Keane (England) scored 116-112, Jack Woodburn (Canada) scored 115-111, and Max DeLuca (USA) scored 115-112. THE RING saw it 116-112 in favor of Pascal, 23-1 (15).

Television: **Versus**
Promoters: **GYM, Interbox**
(6-19-09)

Joseph Agbeko W 12 Vic Darchinyan

Sunrise, Florida: On the same day that a visit by Barack Obama put Ghana in the news, 2-1 underdog Agbeko gave his native country another reason to celebrate as he stunned Darchinyan in front of 9,227 fans at the BankAtlantic Center.

Agbeko, 27-1 (22), matched the trash talking of his brash opponent in the days leading up to their clash for Agbeko's IBF bantamweight belt. It clearly irritated Darchinyan, 32-2-1 (26), who abandoned the boxer-puncher style he'd adapted after suffering a fifth-round kayo loss to Nonito Donaire two years before.

That boxer-puncher style led to Darchinyan, 117½, winning three junior bantamweight belts, taking THE RING's number-one ranking at 115 pounds, and moving into the pound-for-pound top 10. The southpaw found the going much rougher at bantamweight, however, thanks to the craftiness and study chin of Agbeko, 116½, who was making his second defense of the IBF belt.

"I took a different tactic into the ring tonight," Darchinyan said afterward. "I went for the big punch and I lost and I can't say anything about that. I was repeating the same mistakes and I was getting upset. It's not an excuse. I took the bad tactic and I wasn't smart enough tonight. He was the better fighter tonight. I will go back and watch the tape and correct my mistakes."

Darchinyan, 33, opened aggressively and had the 29-year-old Agbeko backing up in a first round that saw both men score with solid shots, including an Agbeko right that momentarily drove Darchinyan back. The frenetic pace continued in a crowd-pleasing second round in which Darchinyan landed a bit more cleanly, though Agbeko opened a cut over the left eye of "The Raging Bull" with a right hand. Both fighters worked the body and tried to rough each other up with their shoulders and heads.

The third round proved to be the turning point. Darchinyan eased his pace, while "King Kong" began stepping back and catching Darchinyan lunging forward. Darchinyan tried to flurry in the final 10 seconds, but Agbeko wobbled him with a series of shots.

In the fourth, Darchinyan kept lunging his way forward in an attempt to land a big left. He got in his share of blows, but none seemed to faze the taller Agbeko, who continued busting up the left side of Darchinyan's face with his vicious lead right hand. Agbeko began mixing in a potent left hook in the fifth, when he also started slipping most of Darchinyan's lefts. Darchinyan's corner implored him to jab his way inside before the sixth, but the Australia-based Armenian continued getting pelted by a steady stream of rights from the New York-based Ghanaian.

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Darchinyan just couldn't avoid Agbeko's right hand

Darchinyan finally began using his southpaw jab in the seventh. He picked up the pace in what was a close round until the final 10 seconds, when referee Tommy Kimmons (USA) awarded Darchinyan a controversial flash knockdown for a shove to the back of the neck. The round also lasted four minutes due to a timekeeper's error. Agbeko came back to stun Darchinyan in the eighth with a right to the head, though Darchinyan wobbled Agbeko as the two flurried at the bell.

Agbeko appeared to be tiring by the ninth, when Darchinyan jabbed his way inside and landed some lefts, though he never could seem to find the right range or angle to score consistently. A headbutt opened up a cut above Darchinyan's right eye in the 10th,

when Darchinyan threw Agbeko to the canvas in frustration. Agbeko's lead right continued to land in the 11th and 12th as the beltholder got enough of a second wind to hold off Darchinyan's desperate rally attempt.

All three Florida judges scored it for Agbeko, with Michael Pernick and Mike Ross tallying 114-113, and Rocky Young seeing it 116-111. It was a breakthrough win for Agbeko, who was ranked number six at bantamweight by THE RING entering the fight.

"I have always said I would carry the greatness of Ghana with me to the top and that's what I have done," Agbeko said in the ring afterward. "I want to be considered among the top pound-for-pound fighters in the world. I think I have earned it."

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Don King Productions, Gary Shaw Promotions**
(7-11-09)

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Adjaho outsmarted himself by refusing to get up

Antonio DeMarco KO 9 Anges Adjaho

Sunrise, Florida: Believing he'd been hit while on a knee, "Baby Face" Adjaho tried to steal a point from DeMarco with a bit of theater in the ninth round of their lightweight clash at the BankAtlantic Center. He proved to be much better at fighting than acting.

Adjaho's bizarre reaction to the shot, which replays showed was legal, resulted in referee Telis Assimenios (USA) counting out the New York-based Benin native. It was a bit of a gift for the southpaw DeMarco, 134½, who was struggling to adapt to the lanky Adjaho, 135.

DeMarco, Tijuana, Mexico, didn't receive a tape on Adjaho until the day before the fight. It might explain why he appeared baffled for much of the bout. DeMarco, 22-1-1 (16), was hesitant to pull the trigger over an opening three rounds that drew plenty of boos, but rounds that Adjaho, 17-2 (9), dominated with a decent right hand off the jab, an occasional left hook, and head movement that kept him away from DeMarco's left.

The 23-year-old DeMarco finally began to close the distance in the fourth, when he drove Adjaho into the ropes with two hard rights, then sealed the round with a left to the head in the final 10 seconds. Adjaho, 32, stood up to DeMarco's pressure in the fifth, however, when he landed a double right hand in the center of the ring after being driven into a corner by a right.

In the sixth, Adjaho was back to dominating with his jab in the center of the ring until DeMarco connected with a left to the chin off his southpaw jab 45 seconds before the bell. DeMarco swarmed for the knockout, but Adjaho survived with the help of a DeMarco slip to the floor.

Adjaho shook off the damage and connected frequently in the seventh round, though a charging DeMarco forced him to do so while fighting in reverse. The two exchanged shots throughout the first minute of the eighth, with DeMarco finally stunning Adjaho with a counter left as Adjaho flung repeated hooks. Adjaho spent the rest of the round staying away and regaining his legs, with DeMarco staying back and allowing his opponent to recover.

The ninth was very close until DeMarco caught Adjaho with a straight left to the eye along the ropes in the final 10 seconds. Hurt and cut, Adjaho stumbled away, and then went to a knee as DeMarco got close. DeMarco fired a left that grazed the back of Adjaho's head a fraction of a second before Adjaho's knee hit the floor. Adjaho rolled onto his belly and placed his face into his gloves. Assimenios counted to eight, then waved his arms just after the bell sounded, signaling he'd stopped it. (Officially, Adjaho was ruled to have been counted out one second before the bell.)

Adjaho quickly jumped up, stunned that Assimenios hadn't ruled it an illegal punch. He continued arguing his case long after the verdict had been announced. "The punch was before the knee," Assimenios said in the ring afterward as he watched a replay. "I feel like I made an excellent call."

Through nine rounds, Michael Pernick (USA) had Adjaho ahead 86-84, Alex Levin (USA) had it 85-85, and Mike Ross (USA) had DeMarco winning 86-84.

"He just really didn't want to fight anymore," DeMarco said afterward.

The win was a WBC eliminator, which apparently puts DeMarco in line for a shot at beltholder Edwin Valero.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Don King Productions, Gary Shaw Promotions**
(7-11-09)

Edgar Sosa KO 5 Carlos Melo

Mexico City, Mexico: For Sosa, boxing's most active beltholder, his ninth defense in 23 months was probably his easiest yet, a blowout of woefully overmatched Melo before

a crowd of more than 12,000 fans at the Arena Mexico. The WBC light flyweight titlist was defending the belt in what amounted to a showcase fight for the hometown fans, and it was all that the unworthy challenger could do to last until the 2:47 mark of the fifth round.

The punchless Melo, 107¾, Panama City, Panama, had lost two of his previous three fights, and the lone win came against an opponent with a sub-.500 record. To his credit, though, he had never been knocked out. And to Sosa's credit, that statement is no longer true.

The speedy 26-year-old Melo tried to use the ring, but Sosa, 108, cut him off with ease and forced him to trade. As a result, the fight was entertaining, but highly one-sided. Sosa, 29, was just too good and too strong, and by the time he knocked the Panamanian down in the third, it was clearly just a question of when the kayo would come.

After Sosa suffered a cut on his left eyebrow from a fourth-round head clash, he felt the urgency to make the end come sooner rather than later. A vicious left hook to the liver in the final minute of the fifth put Melo, 19-9 (2), on the canvas for the second time in the fight, and though he bravely beat the count of referee Frank Garza (USA), a follow-up barrage forced Garza to intervene with 13 seconds left in the round.

"I had worked on my speed, and the plan was to take control from the beginning," said Sosa, 36-5 (20). "[Melo] had fought the best in this weight class and never been stopped. My goal is to reach 10 title defenses and then move up to face the WBC 112-pound champion."

That means Sosa is targeting Daisuke Naito in two fights. Naito is ranked number two by THE RING at flyweight, while Sosa is the number-two contender at junior fly to champion Ivan Calderon's crown.

Promoter: **Boxeo de Gala**
(6-20-09)

Anselmo Moreno W 12
Mahyar Monshipour

Poitiers, France: Roared on by a partisan crowd and fueled by the conviction that he could rescale the heights he reached as a junior featherweight before his retirement in 2006, Monshipour, 117¾, Poitiers, France, via Tehran, Iran, mounted a characteristically spirited challenge for the WBA bantamweight belt, but fell narrowly short as Moreno, 117½, San Miguelito, Panama, secured a split decision after 12 entertaining and hard-fought rounds at Parcs des Expositions. It was Moreno's fourth defense of the title he won against Germany-based Ukrainian Wladimir Sidorenko in May 2008.

Monshipour, 31-4-2 (21), had been one of European boxing's most exciting performers in claiming the WBA super bantamweight belt against France's Salim Medjkoune in July 2003 and making six title defenses, culminating in a sensational slugfest against Thailand's Somsak Sithchatchawal in March 2006 that he lost by 10th-round stoppage. It was THE RING's Fight of the Year but it looked like the end of Monshipour's career in the top flight as he sustained such brutal punishment that he decided to hang up the gloves. Almost predictably, 33 months later he was back in the ring, and he engaged in three bouts before securing a shot at Moreno, whose sole loss came via split decision in a four-rounder in 2002.

The Panamanian southpaw overcame a fighter in the same mold as Monshipour when he took the title off Sidorenko, and the relentless Iranian, now settled in France for many years, was not quite capable of generating the same intense pressure that had overwhelmed so many of his opponents in his prime. The last time he got down to the bantamweight limit was more than a decade ago, but he took the fight to Moreno from the opening bell and tried to cut off the ring quickly so he could get inside to inflict damage with short, clubbing blows. Moreno, a decade younger than Monshipour at 24, used his legs well, however, and his fast hands ensured that he was able to beat Monshipour to the punch, catching the challenger with a left hook to the jaw in the opening round.

This was the pattern as Moreno, 26-1-1 (8), sought to keep Monshipour at arm's length with his stiff southpaw jab and lateral movement. Monshipour, who was promoting his first show, was frustrated in his efforts to pin down the Panamanian, but he never stopped attacking and, from round eight, it appeared that his passionate assault could exact an intolerable toll. Moreno dug in, however, and punched hard and often enough to prevent Monshipour from taking charge. The crowd was on its feet in the 11th as Monshipour piled on the pressure again, but he failed to land enough clean punches over the final six minutes to wipe out the lead that Moreno's boxing skills had accumulated on points.

Nelson Vazquez (Puerto Rico) scored 116-113 for Moreno, and Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa) also had it for the defending titlist, 116-112. Erkki Meronen (Finland) kept it from being unanimous with a card of 115-113 for Monshipour. THE RING scored 115-113 for Moreno. The referee was Raul Caiz Jr. (USA).

Promoter: **Mahyar Monshipour**
(7-4-09)

Brian Doogan

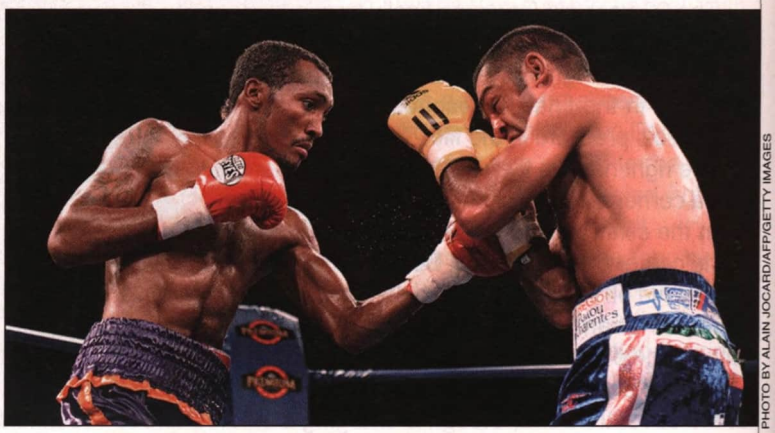


PHOTO BY ALAIN JOCARD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Moreno (left) held off a strong challenge from Monshipour

Jorge Linares KO 8 Josafat Perez

Tamaulipas, Mexico: There are talented fighters who frustrate us because they don't show the full scope of their talents in the ring, and then there are talented fighters who frustrate us because they *do* fight up to their abilities but they simply don't fight often enough. Linares falls into the latter category. After several postponements due to everything from injuries to the outbreak of swine flu, Linares-Perez finally came off, marking the 23-year-old Venezuelan's first fight in seven months and only his third fight since bursting into the American fight fan's consciousness with his knockout of Oscar Larios two years earlier.

Thankfully, when Linares does fight, he always delivers. Perez, 130, Monclova, Mexico, was a relative novice coming off a loss in his last fight, making him a rather unworthy challenger for the WBA 130-pound title Linares holds. But Linares, 130, Tokyo, Japan, via Barinas, Venezuela, did everything you could ask once the bell rang, winning every second of every round and gradually stepping up his attack to earn the knockout at Plaza de Toros.

Both fighters were cautious at the outset. Perez, 25, threw little beyond a pawing jab from his southpaw stance in the opening round, while Linares also was content mostly to jab and circle. But with each passing round, the beltholder upped his output more and took small steps toward wearing Perez down.

Perez never stopped trying and he did succeed in raising a welt under Linares' right eye by the middle rounds. But Perez' face was lumped up all over, and in round eight, "El Nino de Oro" put together the punches required to finish him. About 15 seconds into the round, a tiring Perez walked into a big right hand, followed by a left, then a left hook-right uppercut combination. Moments later, Linares landed a left uppercut, and as Perez was winding up for a retaliatory right hand, Linares got there first with a booming right cross to the chin over the challenger's low left hand. Perez crashed the canvas, but he gamely beat Puerto Rican referee Luis Pabon's count and, though wobbly, was allowed to continue. Linares, 27-0 (18), pounced with a big right hand, then drove home a left uppercut that sent the Mexican wobbling back into the ropes. Another right hand landed and Perez, 12-2 (7), was bordering on being unable to defend himself, prompting Pabon to step in with the challenger still on his feet at the 1:40 mark.

Promoter: **KO Entertainment**

(6-27-09)

Felix Sturm W 12 Khoren Gevor

Nuerburg, Germany: Not for the first time Sturm, 159¼, Leverkusen, Germany, turned in a subpar performance and could consider himself fortunate to hold on to the WBA middleweight title, escaping with a unanimous points decision over Gevor, 159½, Hamburg, Germany, via Edmiazin, Armenia, at Nuerburgring Race Track. It was Sturm's seventh title defense since regaining the belt from Spain's Javier Castillejo in April 2007.

Gevor, 30-4 (16), had given Arthur Abraham plenty of problems two years ago in an IBF middleweight title challenge before he was stopped in the 11th round, and he had since won the European title when he stopped Finland's Amin Asikainen in the seventh round in November 2008. With the 30-year-old Gevor's aggressive style, it was anticipated that Sturm, also 30, would have his work cut out to retain the title, and Gevor wasted no time in going to work on the titleholder's body, getting inside to negate the three-inch disparity in height.

The first few rounds belonged to the challenger, and Sturm, 33-2-1 (14), was on the floor in the third, but French referee Jean-Louis Legland ruled it a slip. Sturm recovered his composure and began to get his jab working, and as Gevor's workrate started to slow down after the sixth round, it appeared that the challenger might be outboxed over the second half of the bout. But he refused to cave in, and Sturm failed to demonstrate the class that Abraham had exhibited in overcoming Gevor. Sturm never assumed full control, and in the late rounds it became clear that his title reign was in jeopardy and just as clear that he was short of ideas in trying to protect his territory.

Raul Caiz (USA) and Dr. Ruben Garcia (USA) both scored 115-113 for Sturm while Daniel Talon (France) was off the mark with his 117-111 scorecard for Sturm. THE RING scored 115-113 for Gevor.

"I won the fight but the officials didn't see it that way," said Gevor. "I gave everything and this 117-111 score is a disgrace for the sport."

Sturm's trainer, Michael Timm, defended the decision. "The clearer punches brought the victory to Felix," he insisted. "Khoren had to bow to the better man. It was a tough fight because Felix was made to fight in such a way that he had to beat Khoren with his own weapons, but he did this and we are happy that he won the fight."

Sturm was lucky to retain the WBA belt against Gevor (right)

PHOTO BY TORSTEN SILZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Promoter Peter Kohl suggested that he would like to match Sturm with world middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik, but negotiations have proven problematic thus far.

Promoter: **Universum**
(7-11-09)
Brian Doogan

Omar Narvaez KO 11 Omar Soto

Buenos Aires, Argentina: Say what you want about the quality of his challengers or the comfort of defending almost exclusively at home (and here in "Ringside Reports" over the years, we've harped on those topics plenty), but 16 title defenses and seven years as a beltholder are noteworthy accomplishments for Narvaez regardless of how he racked up those numbers. The 16th defense, prior to which the WBO named Narvaez "super champion," for whatever that's worth, was of the dominant variety, with the 33-year-old Argentine in command throughout against Mexican fringe contender Soto at Estadio Luna Park.

The southpaw Narvaez, 112, Cordoba, Argentina, fought an exceptionally relaxed fight, standing in the pocket and using subtle movements to make his slower opponent miss. Narvaez mixed his punches to the head and body well, and there was little that Soto, 111, Mexico City, could do in response. The 29-year-old Soto, who lost via sixth-round knockout to Muhammad Rachman in a 105-pound title bout in 2006, grew increasingly frustrated as the rounds wore on, and he lost a point for headbutting in the eighth after referee Roberto Ramirez Jr. (Puerto Rico) had warned him several times prior.

In the 11th, Narvaez broke through with a two-fisted series of powershots to the head, staggering Soto, 17-5-1 (11). A straight left finally put the challenger down, and though he beat the count, his legs were unsteady and Ramirez correctly halted the bout.

With the win, Narvaez advances to 30-0-2 (19). Whether he'll advance to a bout with another beltholder or a RING-rated flyweight remains to be seen.

Promoter: **Osvaldo Rivero**
(6-26-09)

Tomasz Adamek KO 4 Bobby Gunn

Newark, New Jersey: A pall hung over the Prudential Center before Adamek, 199, Jersey City, New Jersey, stepped into the ring against Gunn, 194, Hackensack, New Jersey. The news had already spread throughout the arena about the death of Arturo Gatti earlier that day, leaving an eerie juxtaposition for Adamek, who is taking over as the new major attraction of New Jersey boxing since "Thunder" retired in 2007.

Unlike most Gatti fights, this one wasn't all that memorable, but nobody expected it to be. THE RING world cruiserweight champion Adamek vs. 35-year-old journeyman Gunn was a mismatch, and everyone knew it. But that didn't stop 5,590 fans from showing up, proving what a draw Adamek has become. And it didn't stop Gunn from engaging Adamek, 32. Gunn gave it his best shot, but Adamek pounded his face into a pulp, which caused a stoppage after the fourth

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Adamek enjoyed an easy night against overmatched Gunn

round on the advice of New Jersey State Athletic Commission doctor Bart Shaber.

Adamek worked effectively behind his jab and Gunn could hardly get out of the way of any punches. The defending world champion and IBF titlist was willing to be patient, working the body up and down. The much shorter Gunn could do little, but at least he didn't roll over.

"I was going to keep coming at him," Gunn said. "He's the greatest fighter I ever faced, and I faced some good ones. No one wanted to fight this guy, but I had the guts to step in and fight him."

And absorb shot after shot after shot. In fact, during one span in the third round, Adamek landed 17 unanswered punches, opening cuts on the bridge of Gunn's nose and over his left eye. Gunn, 18-4-1 (15), took more of a one-sided beating in the fourth round, causing referee Earl Brown (USA) to take a look at the brave but—excuse the pun—outgunned Gunn.

"The doctor looked at the cut [over Gunn's left eye] and recommended that I stop it," Brown said. "Gunn was fighting back and I was willing to give him a little longer, maybe another round. But it was a good stoppage."

After what amounted to a spirited sparring session in his second RING title defense, Adamek, 38-1 (26), spoke about future possibilities. With HBO Sports' Senior Vice President of Programming Kery Davis looking on, there was immediate talk of a rematch between Adamek and Steve Cunningham on HBO, with September and October dates possible.

"I'd be willing to give Cunningham a rematch," Adamek said. "There are some other options, but I won't rule out anything."

Promoter: **Main Events**
(7-11-09)
Joseph Santoliquito

Cristobal Cruz W 12 Jorge Solis

Chiapas, Mexico: It's never easy for journeyman-turned-titleholder Cruz, and it isn't always pretty. Against Solis, it was even less pretty than usual, but in the end, Cruz, fighting in front of a partisan hometown crowd at Palenque de

Gallos, won his fifth straight and scored his second defense of the IBF featherweight belt.

The bout was heavy on fouling and flopping, and referee Joseph Cooper (USA) had to work hard for his paycheck. And the judges didn't have an easy task either. Ultimately, they all sided with Cruz, enabling the fighter who was ranked ninth at 126 pounds by THE RING coming into the fight to upset the fighter rated third in the division. It was also an upset based on the fact that Solis had comfortably outpointed Cruz in a 10-rounder back in 2003.

This stat should tell you just about everything you need to know about what an ugly fight this was: Cruz and Solis combined to hit the canvas a total of 11 times, but there wasn't a single official knockdown scored. The opening round set the tone in that regard, with Solis falling three times—twice from being thrown down by Cruz, once after missing wildly with a punch. The first round also set the tone in terms of the roles the fighters would play, with Cruz, 125½, taking the lead and forcing the action (often with inaccurate, lunging punches), while Solis, 126, Guadalajara, Mexico, was content to wait and try to counterpunch.

The action began to heat up early in the third, with the 32-year-old Cruz landing a long right hand and going after the defensive challenger. The controversy also began to heat up with the fight's first two-point deductions. Late in the round, Solis, 29, was cut on the left eyebrow from an accidental clash of heads, and he complained to Cooper until the third man overreacted and took a point from Cruz as if the foul had been intentional. Moments later, an angry Cruz picked Solis up and tackled him to the canvas, drawing a second penalty—this one perfectly warranted.

Another unintentional headbutt cut Solis in the fourth, this one a deeper gash just above the left eyebrow, but no points were taken, thankfully. Solis had a productive round otherwise, scoring with jabs and countering uppercuts. But in the fifth, it was the challenger's turn to lose a point. He landed a low blow early, causing Cruz to complain and be given a minute to recover. But it wasn't long before Solis strayed low again—a clean left to the beltline was followed by a not-so-clean right to the cup—and Cruz went down hard. The low blows appeared accidental, but Solis lost a point, which seemed fair as a make-up call for the first point taken from Cruz two rounds earlier.

Legal punches highlighted the sixth, with Cruz scoring with a sweeping left-right just before the bell to eke out a close one. But by the seventh, the illegal blows were again the story. Solis was targeting the body all round and went very low with a left hand with 20 seconds left, causing Cruz to drop to the mat in pain. A point deduction was warranted, but ref Cooper took it a step farther and penalized Solis two points, which seemed excessive for an accidental foul. In the eighth, an excellent left to the body by Solis buckled the titleholder's knees, and, of course, Cruz complained that the punch was low, then proceeded to pull Solis down.

The action went back and forth in the eighth, ninth, 10th, and 11th rounds, but with the fight seemingly too close to call, Solis dominated round 12. He outboxed and outslugged Cruz throughout the final minute of the fight, causing one to wonder where that output was for the previous 11 rounds, when he let rounds slip away by spending too much time playing defense and looking to counter. With five seconds left on the clock, Solis, 37-2-2 (27), scored with two huge left uppercuts and a left hook that rocked Cruz into the ropes, clearly the biggest punches either man landed all night, but Cruz, 39-11-1 (23), stayed on his feet.

THE RING scored the bout dead even at 112-112, but all three judges slightly preferred the guy making the fight—who also happened to be the guy whose punches elicited cheers from the crowd. Marty Denkin (USA) and Robert Hoyle (USA) both scored it 113-110 for Cruz, and Jean Williams (USA) had it 113-111. Solis was certain he'd won until the scores were announced, and the loss ended a modest four-fight winning streak for him that followed a knockout defeat to Manny Pacquiao in 2007.

Television: **ESPN Deportes**
Promoters: **Banner Promotions, Golden Gloves Promotions, Promociones Zanfer**
(7-11-09)

Jorge Arce KO 3 Fernando Lumacad

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Arce can talk smack and lick his lollipop with the best of them, but the one thing "El Travieso" hasn't done in some time is win a major fight. In his last such opportunity, the 29-year-old Arce,

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Arce gets a much-needed win against Lumacad

115, Los Mochis, Mexico was thoroughly dominated by unified junior bantamweight titlist Vic Darchinyan in February. As he returned to the ring for the first time since that loss, Arce was in need of more than just a lollipop to satisfy his urgings. He needed a victory to get himself back on the road to a significant fight.

Enter made-to-order Filipino Lumacad, a 23-year-old prospect fighting in the United States for the first time in his career. The way Arce treated Lumacad, 114½, Manila, Philippines, he might not want to come back.

With Nacho Beristain working his corner for the first time, Arce, 52-5-1 (40), dismantled the outgunned and overmatched Lumacad, 19-2-2 (7), pummeling him with an overhand right in the third round to end it at the three-quarters packed Adrian Phillips Ballroom, located in Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall. It was just the kind of matter-of-fact victory Arce needed.

But you know it couldn't be an Arce fight without a little blood leaking from somewhere on his face. This time it came just above his left eye, courtesy of what referee Wayne Hedgepeth (USA) determined was a Lumacad headbutt in the second round.

The cut wasn't enough to stop Arce, who dropped Lumacad in the following round before Hedgepath waved it off at the 35-second mark of the third.

"I want to thank my fans and let everyone know that I'm back," Arce told the gathered media through interpreter Ricardo Jimenez of Top Rank. "Lumacad headbutted me and caused the cut over my left eye. I hit him with a right hand really hard on his chin and I knew it was over. I saw a lot of film of Lumacad and I know he was a very technical fighter. But we did a lot of good work under Nacho and it showed tonight."

Television: **Top Rank Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(6-27-09)
Joseph Santoliquito

Paul Spadafora KO 6 Ivan Bustos

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Due to a litany of legal issues and injuries, this was only the fourth fight in nearly five years for former lightweight beltholder Spadafora, 145, and the first of those four in the city referenced in his nickname, "The Pittsburgh Kid." Finally winning his personal battle with alcohol, Spadafora had little trouble against Bustos, 145, in an off-TV bout at a sold-out I.C. Light Amphitheatre.

The 33-year-old Spadafora, 42-0-1 (17), showed few signs of rust in his first action in 14 months, though it must be noted that the reluctant Bustos, 25-13-3 (8), didn't do much to push him. The Buenos Aires, Argentina, native was content to sit back and counter from the first round, which forced Spadafora into the unusual role of aggressor.

That didn't stymie the southpaw Spadafora, who slipped and blocked almost everything Bustos threw at him, when Bustos actually threw. "I don't think I have ever had a fight like this, where I didn't get hit," Spadafora told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. "I think he may have gotten me once with a jab, but other than that, I don't think he got me once. I felt great out there."

PHOTO BY GARY SARTI/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Comebacking Spadafora digs a right into Bustos

It was a defensive performance reminiscent of Spadafora's trainer, Pernell Whitaker. The Hall of Famer took over in Spadafora's corner three weeks before the bout, after previous trainer Jesse Reid was hired as the chief assistant trainer at Freddie Roach's Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles.

"He did everything we asked him to do," Whitaker told the *Post-Gazette*. "That's a wonderful feeling when you keep hitting a man and he can't hit you back … the name of the game is boxing and defense and he did it all; he looked like me."

Spadafora used his southpaw jab to dominate the opening round, then doubled up on the jab and fired more combinations in the second as the 30-year-old Bustos remained on the outside. Spadafora started focusing on the body in the third, though he also bloodied his opponent's nose with a right hook in the round. He had Bustos reeling at the end of the fourth, when he landed a flurry at the bell.

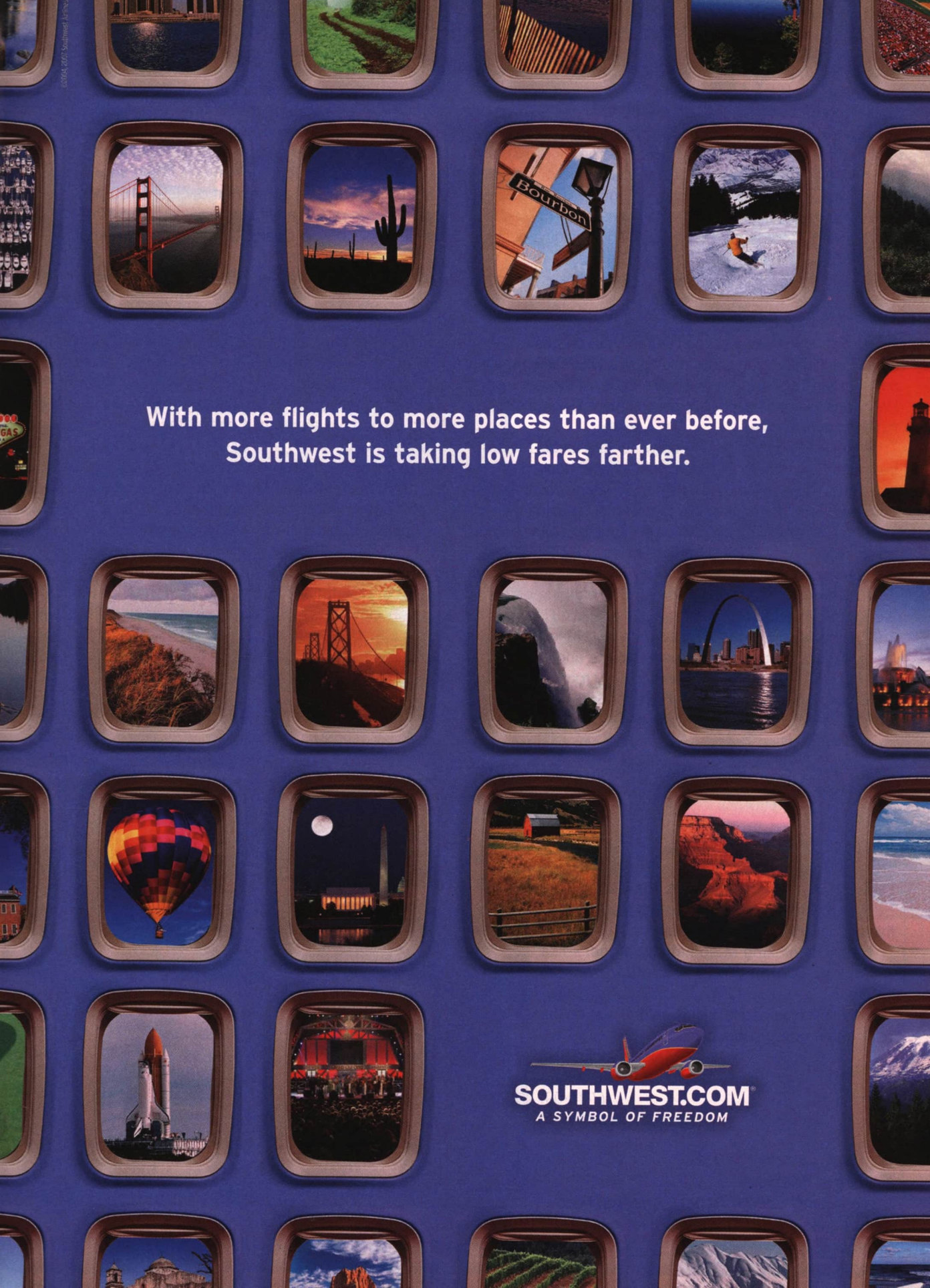
In the fifth, Spadafora busted Bustos up with a four-punch combo, followed by a right hook to the head. Spadafora then swarmed Bustos in the sixth. He doubled his opponent over with a right hook to the body, then threw combinations to the head until Bustos' corner tossed in the towel at the 2:26 mark of the round, forcing referee Ernie Sharif (USA) to stop it.

"I could go 10 rounds today, I feel that good," Spadafora said. I don't think it will be long before I will be back challenging for titles against the top guys again."

Promoter: **Michael Acri**
(5-16-09)

Chris Henry KO 6 Shaun George

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Henry, 177, Houston, Texas, had been through the gamut entering his fight against George, 176½, Brooklyn, New York, at The Arena in Philly. Henry was Tasered and arrested on May 26 for public intoxication and resisting arrest, and it seemed as if he would be spending more time fighting for his freedom than fighting in the ring in the months ahead. While Henry, 28, was awaiting a hearing,



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he was also dealing with the hurdles associated with suffering two defeats in his last four fights. He badly needed something positive to happen. A fight with the 30-year-old George on national television proved to be the perfect tonic.

It didn't start out that way, however. George, 23-3 (18), who was 14 months removed from a career-best knockout win over Chris Byrd, dominated the opening round, plastering Henry with snapping rights to the face. Each time Henry missed with a wild swing, George made him pay with a stinging counter. Several times in the opening round, it looked like Henry was going to hit the deck, but he showed guts to make it through the whole three minutes on his feet.

By the third round, however, the momentum had swung. A Henry right to the jaw grabbed George's attention, and Henry narrowed the punching zone, landing shots instead of whiffing on them like he had in the first two rounds. At the same time, Henry enjoyed another positive development: George stopped throwing punches.

Henry kept coming in the fourth and fifth, and in the sixth, he belted George with a straight right and left hook, dropping him. Referee Steve Smoger (USA) reached the count of eight before George got back to his feet. Henry, sensing the end was near, attacked, sending George crumbling to the canvas a second time and forcing Smoger to wave it off at the 1:08 mark of the sixth round.

"With what's happened to me and everything going on around me, it made me more focused," a relieved Henry, 24-2 (19), said. "If I lost, I don't know where my career goes from there. A lot of things have happened to me and I just had to have faith in myself. It hasn't been an easy road."

Especially the opening round against George.

"I had to adjust by getting inside and hitting him with short, quick bodypunches," Henry said.

George was inconsolable afterward.

"I thought I could have got [Henry] in the first round if I put my punches together better," he said. "It all came down to what I was doing and what I wasn't doing. I gave away the fight. I hurt my right shoulder and right hand in the first round and I couldn't do anything after that. But it's my fault. Everyone did their job tonight except me. I have to think about what I want to do next."

Henry is thinking of something bigger—like a crack at Tavoris Cloud in another national TV fight.

"I think I've earned it," Henry said. "I was on the brink and now I've come back."

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **CES Boxing**
(7-10-09)
Joseph Santoliquito

Daniel Jacobs KO 8
George Walton

Tohono O'odham Nation, Arizona: Following a series of effortless wins over hopelessly outclassed opponents, middleweight prospect Jacobs is beginning to test himself against middle-of-the-road journeymen, which has brought his true potential into sharper focus. While the so-called "Golden Child" is probably not the dazzling talent those early walkovers seemed to indicate, he's still got a lot going for him and could very well crack the top 10 of today's somewhat depleted 160-pound class in the near future. If anything, his scheduled 10-rounder at the Desert Diamond Casino indicated that yet another step up in class is in order.

The muscular Walton, 161¾, Harlem, New York, did okay during the pedestrian first round, but was knocked down with a left in the second. He didn't seem hurt and easily beat American referee Robert Ferrara's count, but was under heavy pressure along the ropes the rest of the round nonetheless.

From the third round on, Jacobs, 161½, Brooklyn, New York, dished out a steady if unspectacular beating without having to work very hard. At times he seemed bored with the whole affair, but when a clash of heads cut him over the right eye in the fourth, the 22-year-old Jacobs flurried briefly, but never went for the finish.

Jacobs' laid-back approach allowed the bout to drag on far too long, before he finally erupted in the eighth round with a barrage of blows to Walton's head. When a left uppercut dramatically snapped Walton's head back and caused him to turn sideways, Ferrara wisely stepped in and stopped the one-sided bout at the 1:59 mark.

The win lifted Jacobs to 17-0 (14), while the 35-year-old Walton slipped to 20-4 (12).

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(6-26-09)
Nigel Collins ■

PHOTO BY CHRIS CODUTO/HOGAN PHOTOS/GBP

Jacobs breezes to perfunctory TKO of Walton

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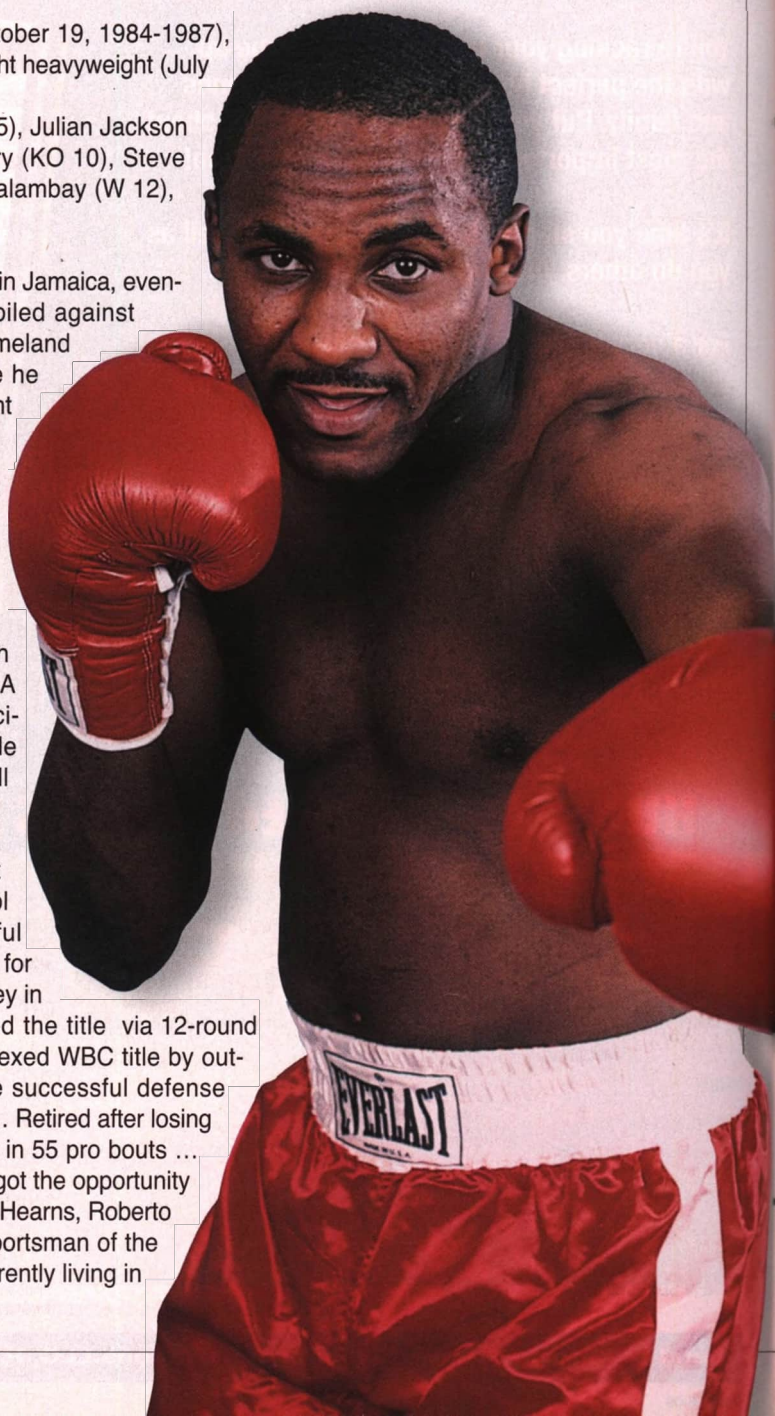
Hall of Fame Profile

THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

Mike McCallum

Birthdate: December 7, 1956
Birthplace: Kingston, Jamaica
Nickname: Bodysnatcher
Weight Classes: Junior middleweight, middleweight, light heavyweight
Professional Record: 49-5-1 (36)
Titles Held: WBA junior middleweight (October 19, 1984-1987), WBA middleweight (May 10, 1989-1991), WBC light heavyweight (July 23, 1994-June 16, 1995)
Best Performances: Donald Curry (KO 5), Julian Jackson (KO 2), Michael Watson (KO 11), Milton McCrory (KO 10), Steve Collins (W 12), Herol Graham (W 12), Sumbu Kalambay (W 12), Jeff Harding (W 12), James Toney (D 12)
Year of IBHOF Induction: 2003
Background: Started stellar amateur career in Jamaica, eventually tallying a 240-10 record, much of it compiled against international competition ... Represented his homeland at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, where he failed to medal ... 1977 National AAU welterweight champion, 1977 and '79 National Golden Gloves welterweight champion ... Welterweight gold medalist 1978 Commonwealth Games ... Silver medalist at 1979 Pan Am Games ... Turned pro in January 1981 in Las Vegas, Nevada, with a fourth-round kayo victory ... Was soon recognized as a highly skilled technical boxer with knockout power, especially to the body, which earned him his nickname ... Won vacant WBA 154-pound title with a unanimous 12-round decision over Sean Mannion in October '84 ... Made six successful defenses, all via knockout ... Fell short in first bid to win WBA middleweight belt, losing a close 12-round decision to Sumbu Kalambay in March 1988 ... Captured vacant WBA title with a narrow, split decision over Herol Graham in May 1989 ... Tallied three successful defenses before being stripped of the WBA strap for challenging IBF 160-pound titleholder James Toney in December 1991, a bout in which Toney retained the title via 12-round draw ... Moved up to light heavyweight and annexed WBC title by outpointing Jeff Harding in July 1994 ... Made one successful defense before losing belt to Fabrice Tiozzo in June 1995 ... Retired after losing to Toney in February 1997 ... Never knocked out in 55 pro bouts ... Despite enjoying great success in the ring, never got the opportunity to fight such major stars as Ray Leonard, Thomas Hearns, Roberto Duran, or Marvin Hagler ... Named Jamaica's Sportsman of the Year seven times between 1978 and 1990 ... Currently living in Las Vegas and training boxers.



A relaxed-looking McCallum watches referee Richard Steele count out Donald Curry in the fifth round of their 1987 bout in Las Vegas. Underdog McCallum flattened Curry with a perfect left hook to the chin for one of the most spectacular knockouts in junior middleweight history.

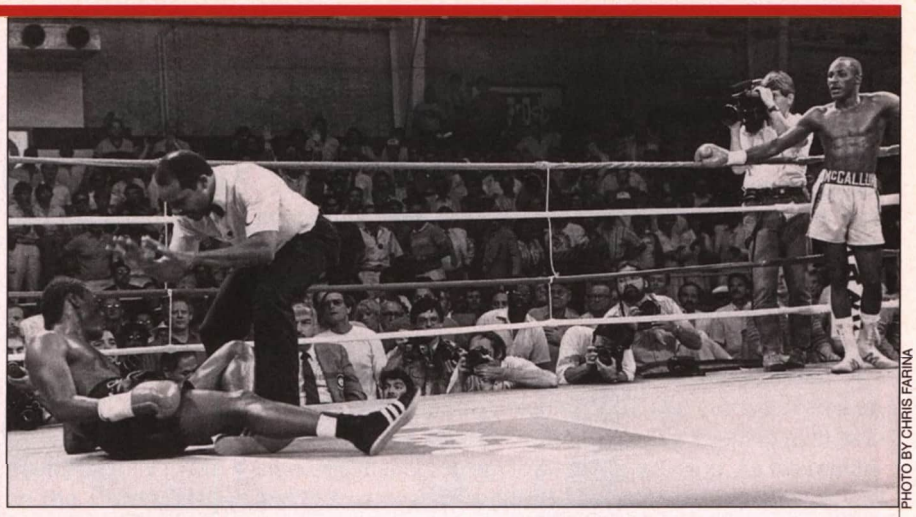


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

McCallum demonstrates his flawless body-punching technique en route to a second-round TKO of Julian Jackson in defense of the WBA junior middleweight title, August 23, 1986, in Miami Beach, Florida.

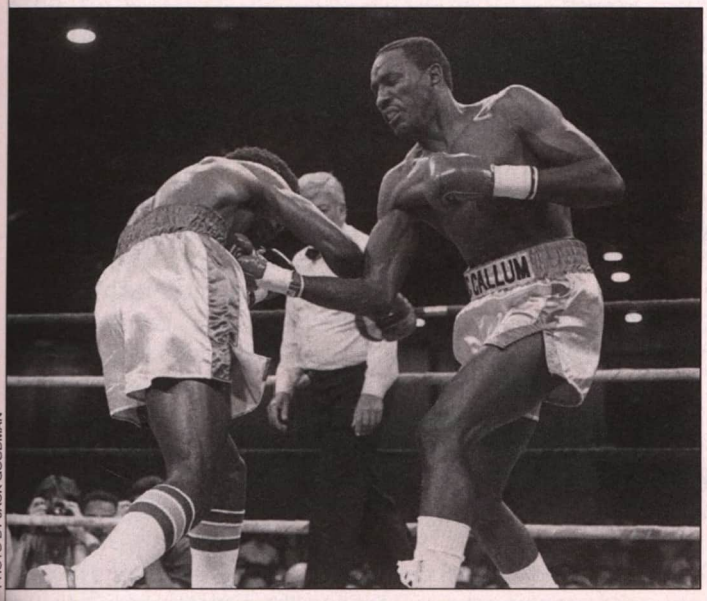


PHOTO BY JACK GOODMAN

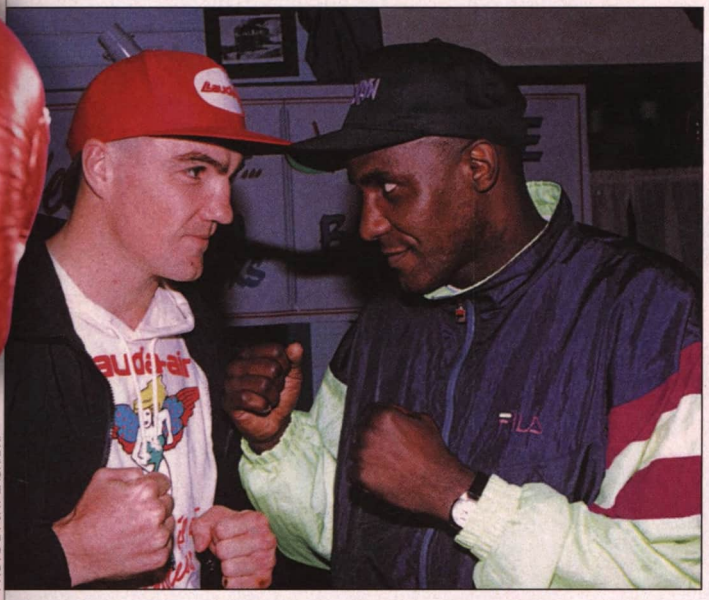


PHOTO BY JAY LASH/DKP

Jeff Harding squares off with McCallum prior to their 1994 bout in which McCallum won the WBC light heavyweight title. McCallum was past his peak, but still too much for the Australian slugger.

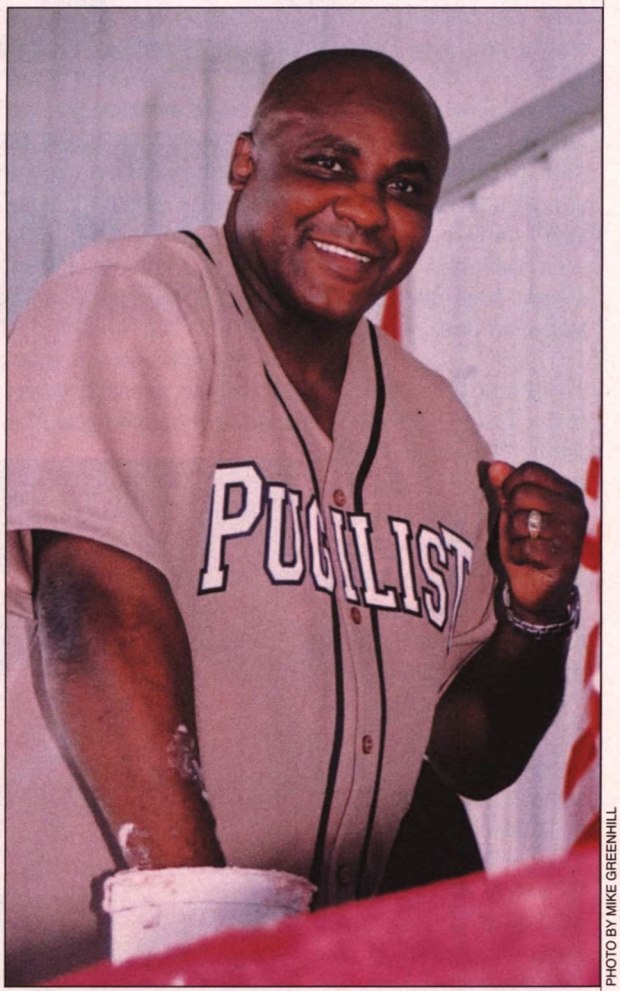


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

McCallum has his fist cast in plaster at the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, where he was inducted in June 2003. To date, McCallum is the only Jamaica-born boxer to be enshrined in the IBHOF.

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 (Continued from Page 26)

the Games I was convinced I would have won the gold medal. I was heartbroken and quit boxing for a while."

After turning down the chance to box for Britain in the 2012 Olympics, he accepted a professional offer from Mick Hennessy (who promotes Carl Froch and Junior Witter). When his first fight came up, he was on honeymoon in Portugal, and only returned three days before the fight. Weighing a chubby 261 pounds, he blasted out the Hungarian cruiserweight Bela Gyongyosi in one round.

By his second fight, six weeks later, he had lost eight pounds and looked impressive in stopping the 21-3 (20) German, Marcel Zeller, in three. That result instantly made him the most talked-about prospect in the country. His name, height, good looks, and cocky attitude all helped, but the key ingredient was fighting ability. He was said to have bossed around Martin Rogan and the Cuban heavyweight Mike Perez in sparring, and his showing against the 232½-pound Zeller seemed to confirm this.

There were residues of clumsiness, too many arm punches, and a ring of puppy fat around his waist, but there was more to admire. Fury showed surprising speed, timing, and athleticism for his size, along with sharp reflexes, a fine variety of punches, and a potent body attack. He also showed a sturdy chin. "I've never been dropped, not even in the gym," he said. "I never even took a standing count as an amateur."

Within seven months, Fury had raked up seven wins and seven knockouts—with opponents of a higher caliber than most novice heavies face (their combined record was 88-67-5). His sixth opponent was 6'7", 242-pound Irish-born 23-year-old Scott Belshaw who, in 11 fights, had lost just once (easily avenged), with seven knockouts. Yet he failed to land a single punch against Fury, who dropped him twice with bodyshots in the first round and then stopped him with the same in the second.

Fury's progress was delayed by a back injury sustained in sparring, and although he admitted it was not yet fully healed, he stopped Aleksandrs on July 18, to get ready for an English title bid against 250-pound John McDermott, 25-5 (16), in September. "I'll stop him in five or six with bodyshots," he predicted.

His working day starts with a six-mile run followed by a morning workout with weights, pads, and ground exercises, sprinting in the afternoon, and an early evening gym session. His main problem is securing sparring: As his reputation has spread, potential British sparring partners, as well as opponents, have cried off. The result is that he has had to travel. He went to Germany to prepare for the Belshaw fight and at the time of this writing was about to go to Russia to spar with Alexander Povetkin.

He is currently trained by his uncle Hughie Fury and doesn't see the need for change. "There's only so much a trainer can do," Tyson said. "Fighters make trainers—and anyway I'm working on my defense, and I have a lot of time and am in no rush."

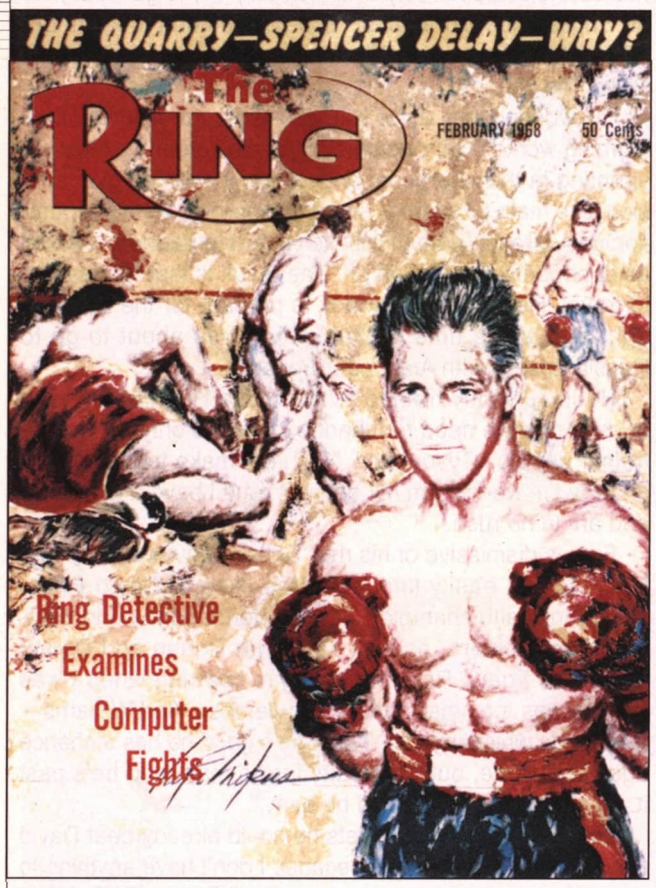
Fury is dismissive of his rival British heavyweights, saying he could easily knock out the likes of David Price, Commonwealth champion Sam Sexton, and the undefeated Derek Chisora, as well as Martin Rogan and Danny Williams. "I gave Rogan a hiding in sparring when I was 18—he was too small and had no defense. And Williams—it depends which version. When he's good he has a chance against anyone, but time waits for no man, and he's past it. I'd stop him and it would be easy."

Less realistically, he insists he could already beat David Haye. "It won't happen yet because I don't have anything to offer," Fury said, "But he'll get knocked out by Klitschko and I'll win the British, Commonwealth, and European titles, and then maybe. He's a cruiserweight, but I can match his speed and he won't be able to take my power."

Fury, who turns 21 on August 12 and will soon become a father for the first time, says he will be in a position to challenge for the world title in two or three years. "Then," he said, "I will unify the world title, defend it a few times, and retire as reigning undisputed champion by the time I am 30." ■

Fury makes quick work of Matt Ellis, scoring a second first-round stoppage. Fury comes with a lot of confidence, and little tinge of brashness, saying he's ready for heavyweight contender David Haye right now.

February 1968



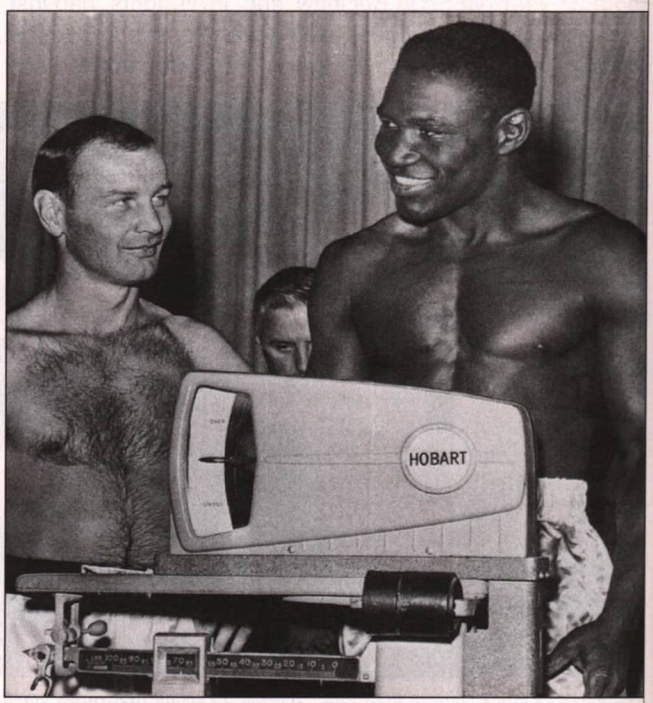
COVER STORY: "The Quarry-Spencer Delay—Why?" headline above the logo refers to the illustration and two articles inside the magazine about the WBA heavyweight elimination tournament, while "Ring Detective Examines Computer Fights" is an analysis of Murry Woroner's All-Time Heavyweight Championship Tournament," a syndicated radio series pitting heavyweight champions of the past against each other in fantasy fights.

Although THE RING continued to recognize Muhammad Ali as heavyweight champion and Joe Frazier would soon win the New York State Athletic Commission's version of the title, the WBA was in the midst of its own mini-tournament to determine a successor to Ali, who was still appealing his felony conviction for refusing induction into the U.S. Army.

So far in the WBA tournament, Jimmy Ellis had stopped Leotis Martin and outpointed Oscar Bonavena, while Quarry had decisioned ex-champ Floyd Patterson and was scheduled to fight Thad Spencer next. But without Ali or Frazier's involvement, the tournament had struggled at the box office, with barely 6,000 customers turning out in Louisville, Kentucky, for the Ellis-Bonavena match.

Eventually, Quarry TKO'd Spencer and met Ellis in the tournament finale, where Ellis captured the WBA strap with a 15-round decision on April 27, 1968.

"Deserving Foster Waits For Shot At Tiger" by Nat Fleischer covers light heavyweight champion Dick Tiger's successful defense against Roger Rouse (a victory that earned Tiger Fighter of the Month honors)



Rouse and Tiger weigh in for their light heavyweight title bout

World Champions

(for the period ended December 20, 1967)
Heavyweight: Muhammad Ali
Light Heavyweight: Dick Tiger
Middleweight: Emile Griffith
Welterweight: Curtis Cokes
Junior Welterweight: Paul Fuji
Lightweight: Carlos Ortiz
Junior Lightweight: Yoshiaka Numata
Featherweight: vacant
Bantamweight: Fighting Harada
Flyweight: Chartchai Chionoi

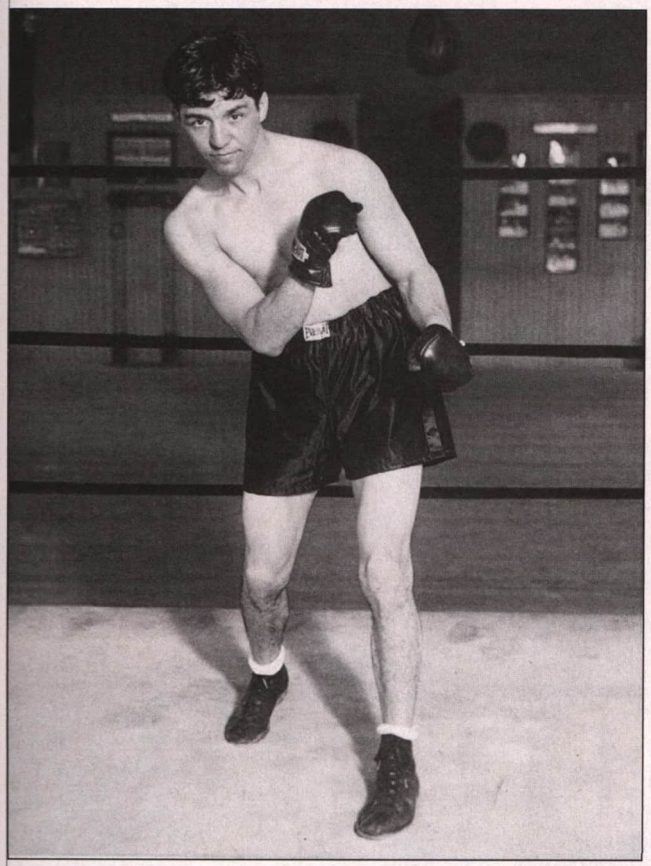
and also advocates that number-one contender Bob Foster gets the next crack at the Nigerian.

"Dick put an end to the aspirations of his opponent decisively," wrote Fleischer. "The champion floored his rival in the ninth round with a savage hook that brought blood from Rouse's mouth, again in the 10th for a brief count, and the kayo, brought on by a crushing right to the head that rolled Rouse over on his face and right shoulder."

Foster got his chance in Tiger's next defense and took advantage of the opportunity, winning the 175-pound title with a crushing fourth-round knockout.

"Robinson, Jeanette, Aaron In Hall Of Fame" by Jersey Jones announces the enshrinement of Sugar Ray Robinson (Modern), Joe Jeanette (Old-Timer), and Barney "Young" Aaron (Pioneer) in THE RING's Hall of Fame. In order to be elected, a fighter had to be named on 75 percent of the ballots cast by writers and broadcasters. Robinson beat out Max Baer by a vote of 223 to 209, with Tony Canzoneri coming in third with 197 votes.

"Sammy Mandell, 1904-1967" by Nat Loubet pays tribute to former lightweight champion Mandell, who died on November 7, 1967, at the age of 63. Mandell, from Rockford, Illinois, won the 135-pound title with a 10-round decision over Rocky Kansas in July 1926, and ruled the division until July 1930, when Al Singer knocked him out.



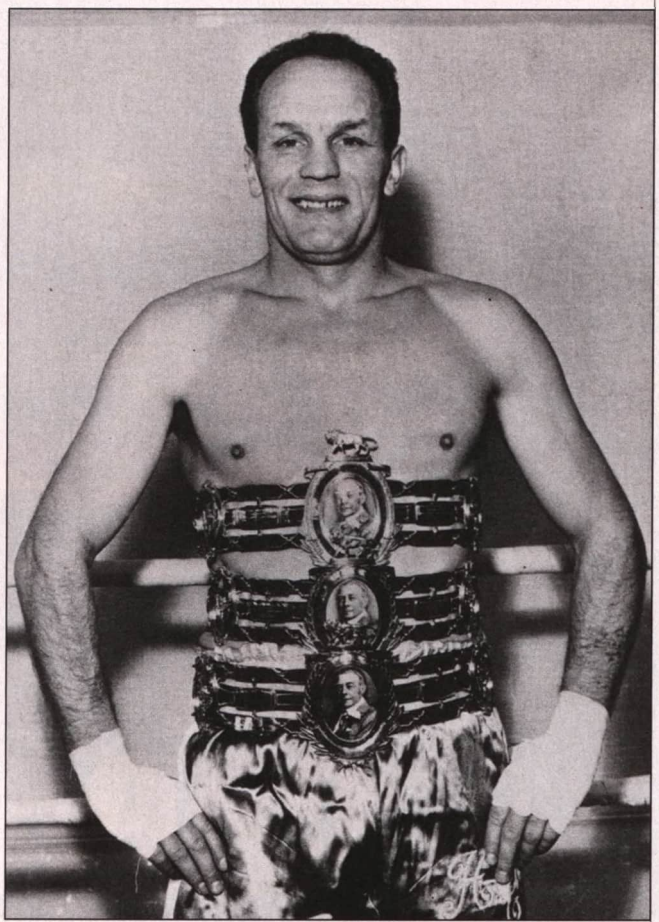
Mandell as he looked in his prime as lightweight champ

"Mandell, 'The Sheik' or 'Boxing's Beau Brummel,' as he was dubbed by the boxing writers for his movie hero looks, was never much of a puncher," wrote Loubet, "but was a Fancy Dan with the grace and speed of a Jem Driscoll, Abe Attel, Benny Leonard, and/or Sid Terris."

Among the outstanding fighters Mandell beat during his 14-year career were Jimmy McLarnin, Tony Canzoneri, Kansas, and Terris. His overall record was 82-17-8 (28) with 60 no-decisions and 1 no-contest.

"The British Isles" by U.K. correspondent Johnny Sharpe features victories by English heavyweights Brian London and Henry Cooper over Zora Folley and Billy Walker, respectively. London won a "mauling" 10-rounder over the American, while Cooper stopped Walker on cuts in the sixth to become "the longest reigning British champion and the outright winner of three Lonsdale belts."

"In And Around Philadelphia" by Archie Pirolli spotlights Gypsy Joe Harris' close call against Bobby Cassidy in front of 4,689 fans at the Arena. "Harris had to survive a spectacular late rally to save his unbeaten record of 22 straight victories," wrote Pirolli. In the co-feature, Bennie Briscoe stopped Ike White in the third round. Both bouts were in the middleweight division. ■



Cooper shows off his three Lonsdale belts

POR LOS QUE SE ATREVEN A SUBIR AL RING

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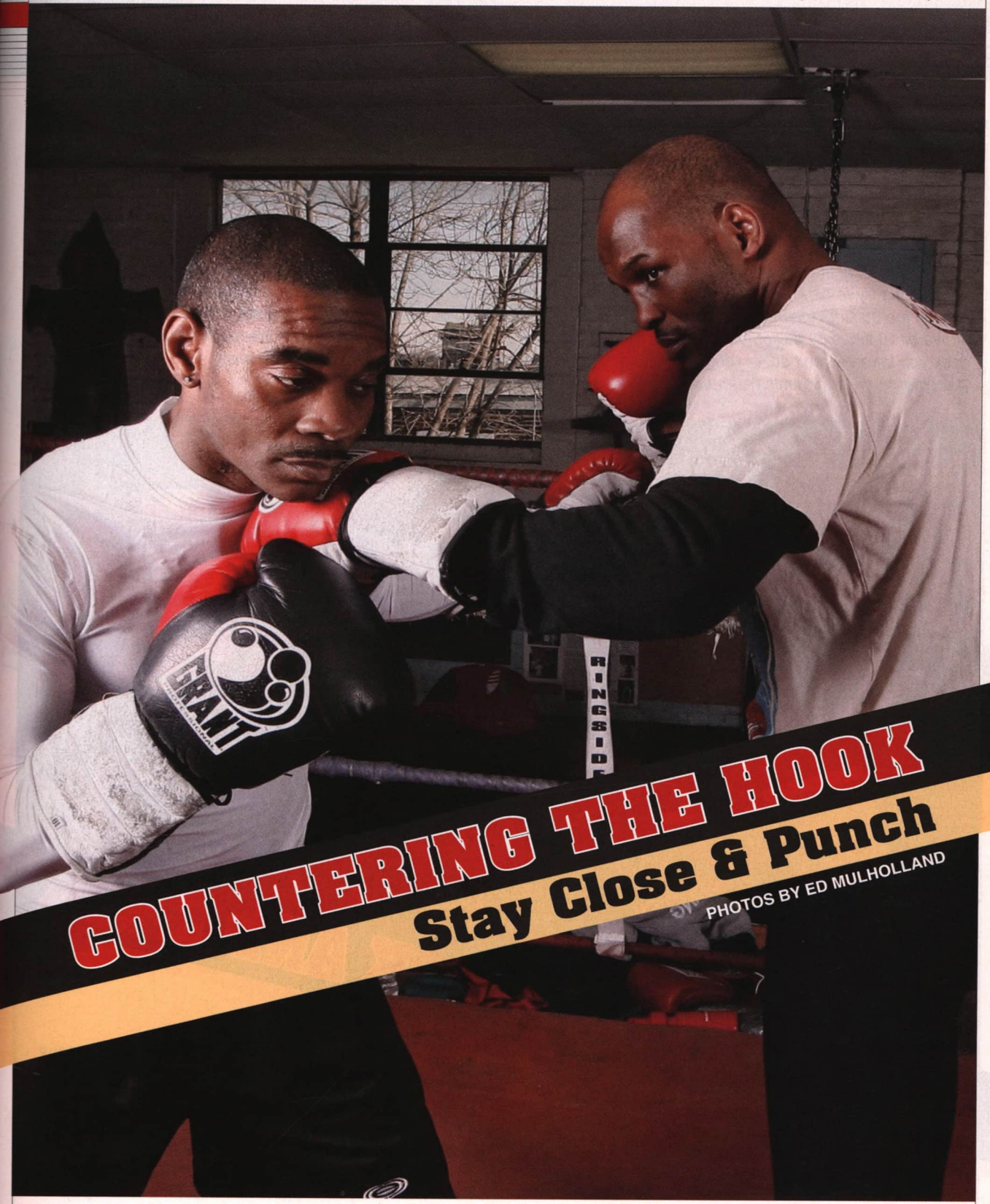
[Perfect Execution]

Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

By Bernard Hopkins



COUNTERING THE HOOK

Stay Close & Punch

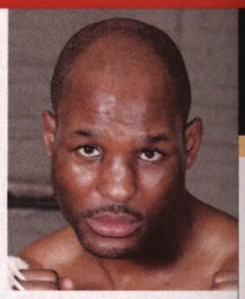
PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

We've said before that every time a man punches he leaves himself open. There's not a fighter in the world, never has been, who's able to punch and cover up at the same time. So every time your man punches, it's your job to get to that spot that he's left open. You do that not just to land for the sake of landing, but also to make him think twice about punching.

You know how sometimes you watch a fight and one guy won't let his hands go? A lot of the time it's because the other guy showed him that when he punches he gets hit. You convince your man it's better to keep his hands to himself, that every time he tries to land he gets tagged, he starts to think just about defense. That happens, and your job is just about done.

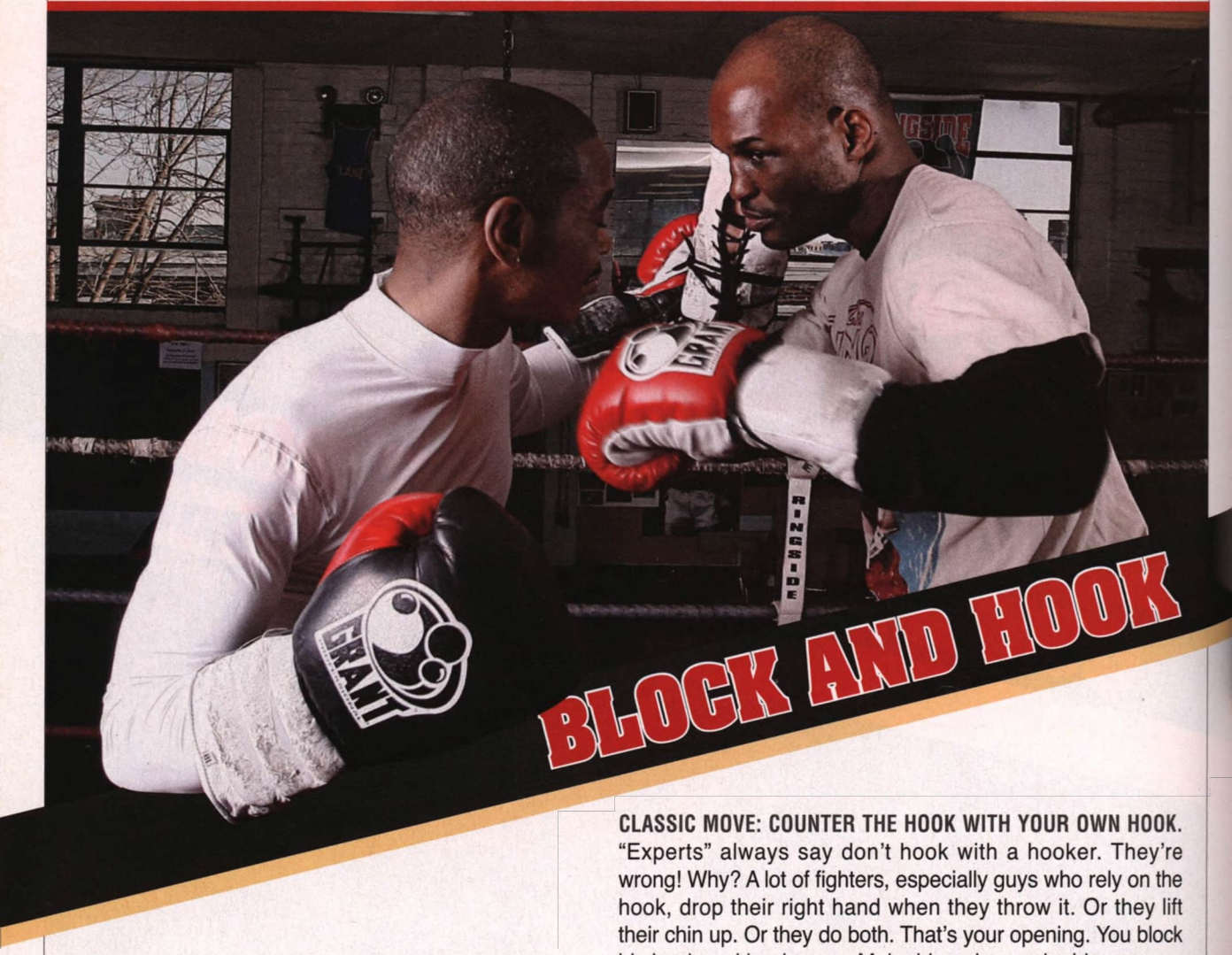
The most important thing about countering the left hook, or any wide punch is this: Don't pull your head back. That's an amateur move. Only guys like Muhammad Ali could get away with that, and he couldn't all the time, which is why guys with good left hooks, like Joe Frazier, gave him trouble. The only times Ali was legitimately dropped it was by left hooks.

So don't try to be Ali. You want to step inside the punch so you can block it and counter. You stay on the outside against a guy with a good left hook and even if you make him miss the first four or five or 10 times by pulling back, sooner or later he's going to land one. Plus, every time you pull back you take yourself out of range to counter. Remember, you don't want just to make him miss; you want to make him miss and then pay. That's what boxing's all about.



BERNARD HOPKINS
Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)

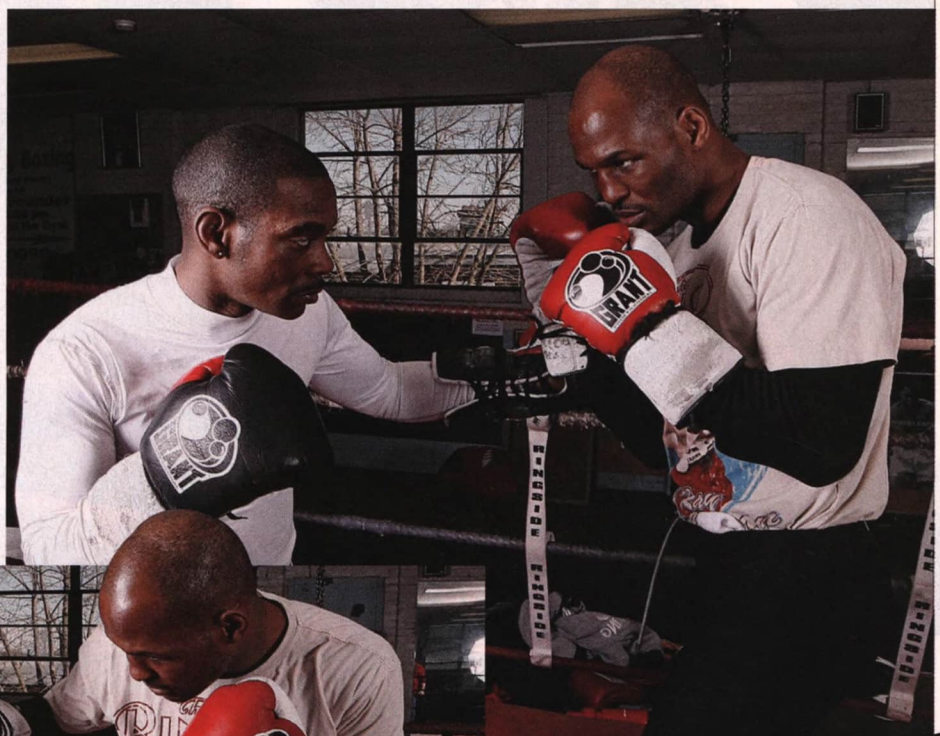


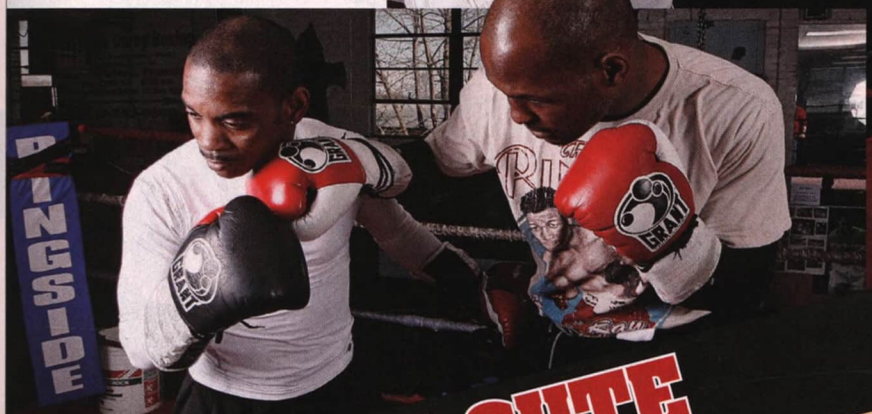
BLOCK AND HOOK

CLASSIC MOVE: COUNTER THE HOOK WITH YOUR OWN HOOK. "Experts" always say don't hook with a hooker. They're wrong! Why? A lot of fighters, especially guys who rely on the hook, drop their right hand when they throw it. Or they lift their chin up. Or they do both. That's your opening. You block his hook and land yours. Make him miss, make him pay.

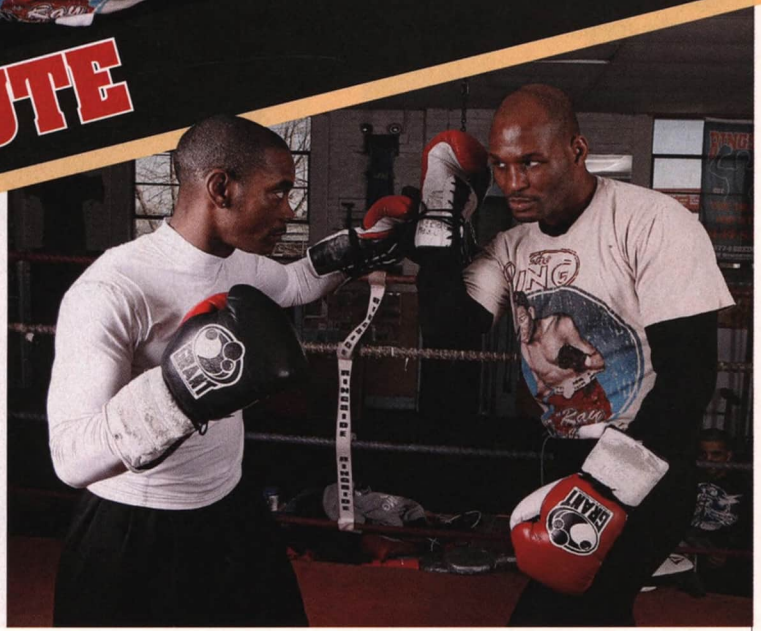
FIND THE OPENING

YOUR MAN THROWS HIS HOOK TO YOUR BODY. Where's the opening? The left side of his jaw, which is at the end of your right hand, if you're paying attention. Catch the hook on your elbow and drop in the right. Step into it and remember your form: short and straight, with your chin down.

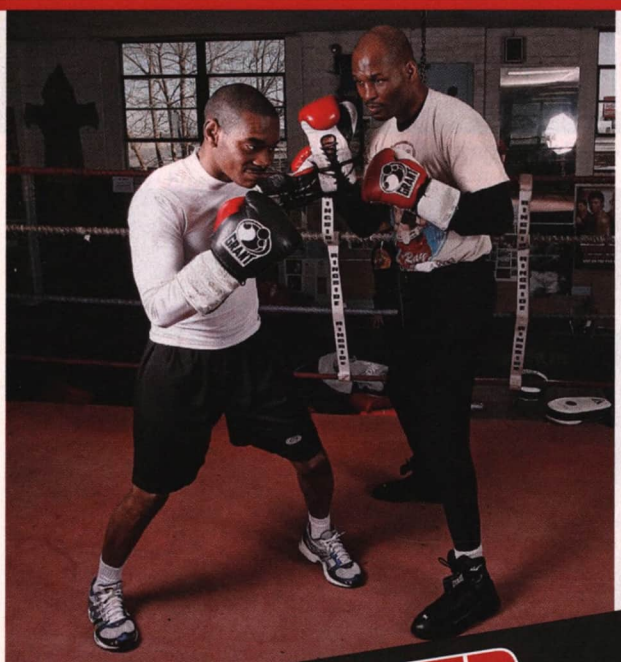


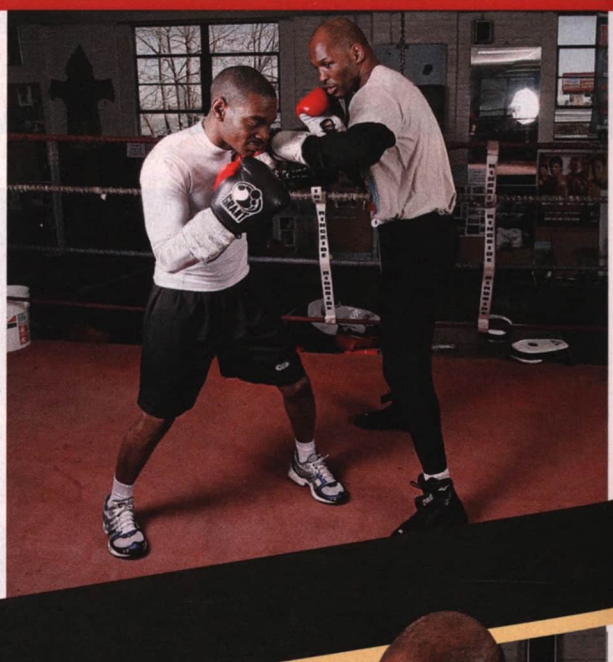


DON'T GET CUTE

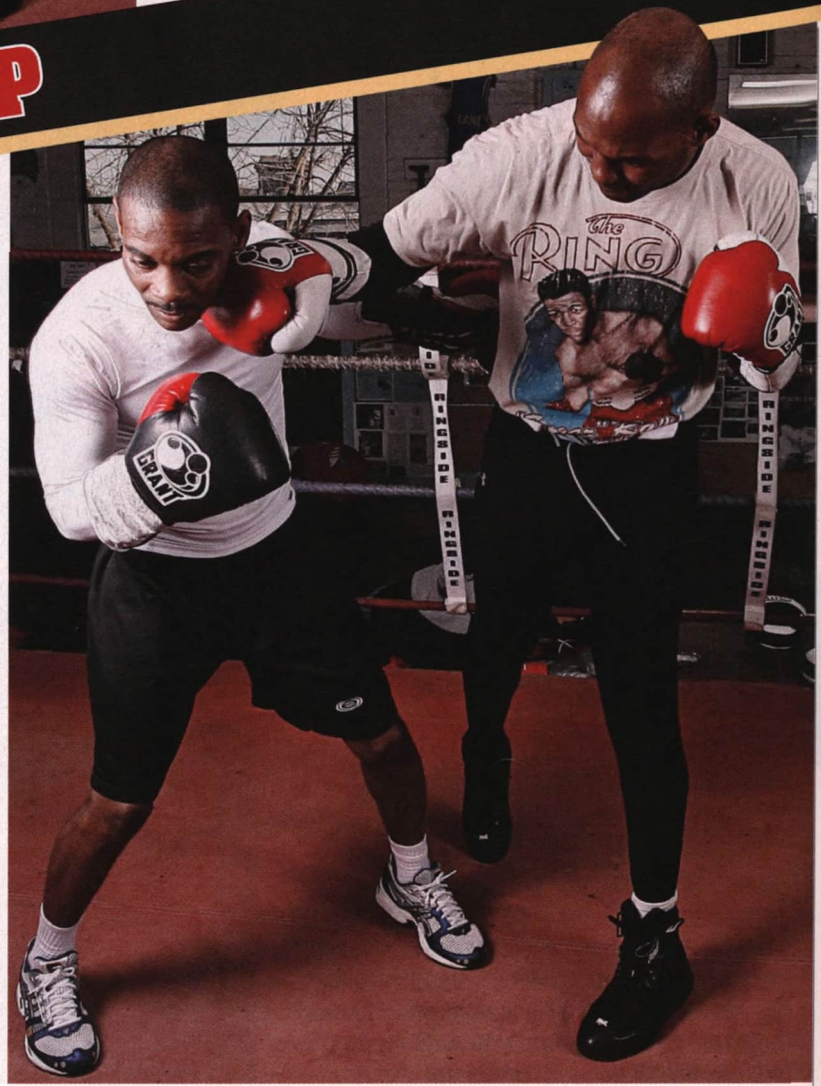


SURE, I'M HAVING A LITTLE FUN HERE BLOCKING DANNY'S HOOK, BUT HOW AM I GOING TO COUNTER? My left hand is down so I can't come with my own hook. And if he's smart, he'll throw the straight right. And I'm in no position to block it. If you lose your form, you're going to pay, sooner or later. Always: hands up, chin down.

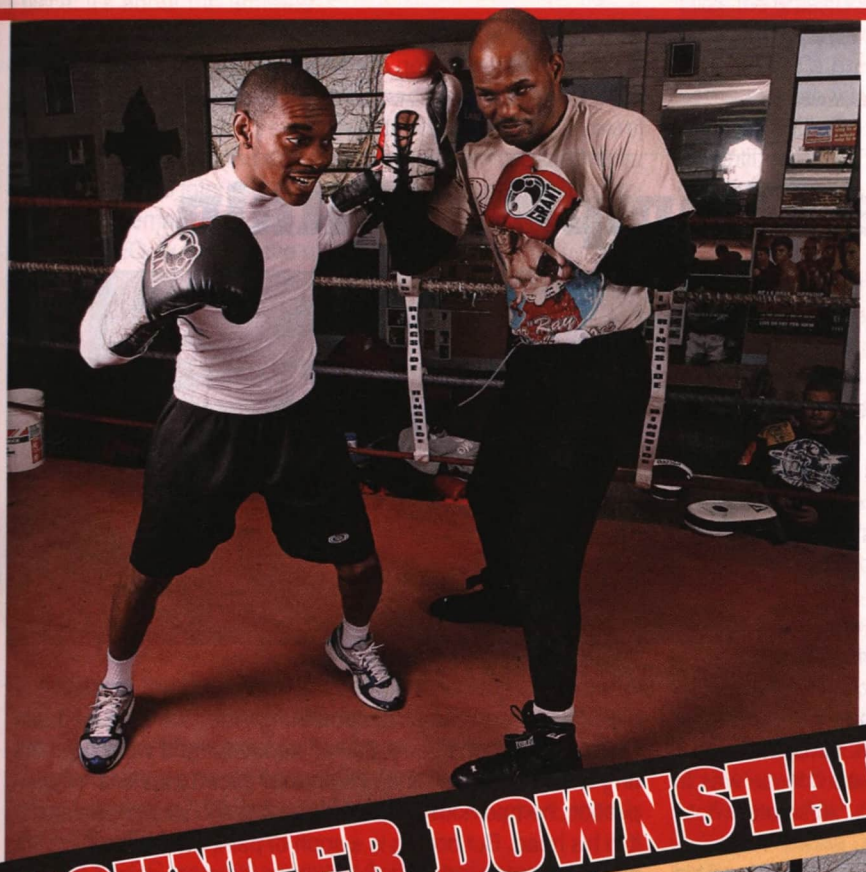




TAKE A STEP

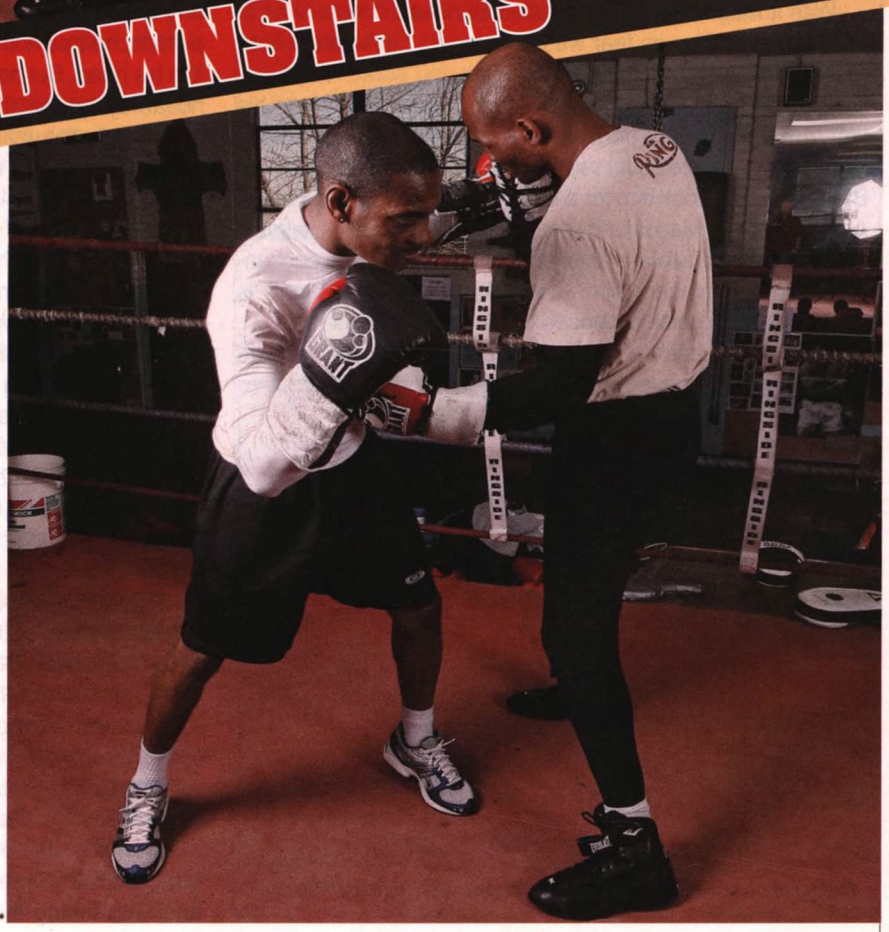


LOOK AT THE PUNCHING OPPORTUNITY I CREATE WHEN, INSTEAD OF STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF MY MAN, I take a little step to my right. This is what trainers mean when they talk about using angles. Block, step, left-hook, right-hand. It's all about positioning. There's not a thing Danny can do here but take my punches. Perfect execution.



COUNTER DOWNSTAIRS

YOU WANT TO TAKE A MAN'S HEART AWAY, COUNTER HIM DOWNSTAIRS. Danny's leaning into a left hook here and look how open his body is. I take a short step to the right and drive home a left uppercut right to the pit of his stomach. Then, if I want to, I can come right back over with a right hand again. And then another hook.



By Michael Rivest
PHOTOS BY RICHARD BRIAN

Finding The Champion Within

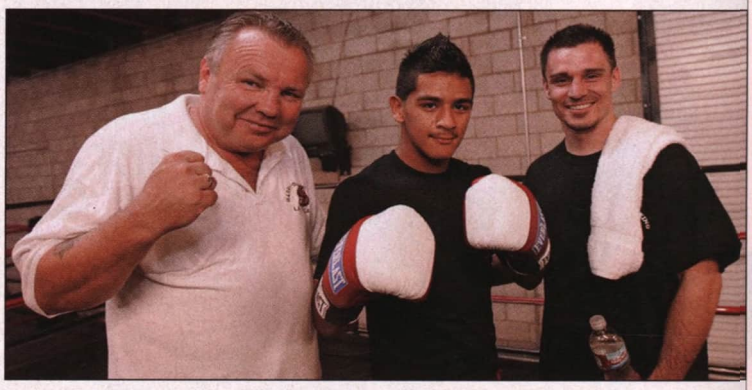
Coming into the June 2009 U.S. Nationals Boxing Tournament in Denver, 17-year old Jesus "Jesse" Magdaleno had plenty of reason to be sure of himself. He'd just taken the National Golden Gloves title in the 119-pound weight division a month before.

"He tore through the competition," said Coach Pat Barry, who, along with son-in-law Augie Sanchez, has been training Magdaleno since he was six. But instead, Magdaleno seemed to lose his fire.

"He didn't even want to go to the Nationals," said Sanchez. "His focus was gone."

"I just didn't feel right," Magdaleno said.

Thus began the run-up to the most important bout in the boxer's young career. In the narrow space between two of the biggest national tournaments in amateur boxing, he was staring down his toughest opponent yet: himself.

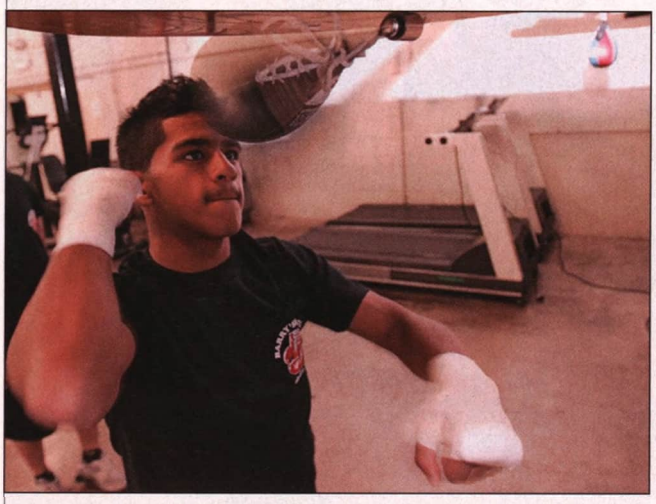


Magdaleno with coaches Barry (left) and Sanchez

Was it fatigue? Fear? "No," said Sanchez. "Jesse was in shape." And as far as fear was concerned, "Absolutely not," Magdaleno was quick to add.

Magdaleno made the trip to Denver anyway and won his first tournament bout on the strength of his superior boxing skills alone. "But we could see he was sleepwalking through it," Barry said, "so I took him for a long walk and we talked it over." As it turned out, Magdaleno was questioning himself. He knew he was about to face a level of competition he'd yet to encounter and it was bothering him—a lot. "Are you good enough?" is a hard question when it's posed to the man in the mirror.

National competition is one thing, but two-time Olympic veteran Rau'shee Warren is something else. "As long as Jesse kept winning," observed Barry, "he knew he'd wind up in the ring with Rau'shee. Since he'd never faced that level of competition, he had nothing to compare it to, no way to prepare for it in his head. But boxing is a sport of pain, I told Jesse. And it's not always physical pain. Sometimes it's more painful to throw yourself into the unknown. But if you want to be great, you have to just decide to do it, to take the chance."



Magdaleno overcame misgivings to become U.S. National champion at 119 pounds

Barry's counsel worked because in bout number two Magdaleno was himself again, stopping Texas' Isaac Torres with a bodyshot midway through the final round.

Then, in the semifinals, came the moment of truth. Magdaleno watched Warren step into the ring like he owned it. Even the tattoo on his back proclaimed him "The Chosen One." But Magdaleno dug deep and stepped into the space reserved for true warriors, the complete unknown.

Three rounds later, he was headed to the finals, where he easily defeated Connecticut's Luis Rosa. But that last victory was no surprise to Coaches Barry and Sanchez. Magdaleno had already found the champion within.

A Message To USA Boxing And The USOC: Remember The Athletes

USA Boxing's Board of Directors had no choice but to fire CEO Jim Millman this past June. He not only failed to deliver on his promise to generate funds, he left USA Boxing more than $1.8-million in debt and in essentially the same hot water with the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) that it was when Millman arrived in 2007.

Granted, USA Boxing needs to find itself once and for all, but the USOC needs to step up to the role of true partner and stop taking the easy road of glorified cop. Put simply,

both entities need to remember why they're there in the first place: It's about the athletes.

Millman came aboard two years ago, after the USOC threatened to decertify USA Boxing as the governing body of amateur boxing in the country. They had grown tired of USA Boxing's ever-changing executive directors (10 in 13 years) and the inevitable consequence of weak central leadership, namely regional interests overriding the good of the organization. They demanded a new system of governance that established a CEO, but under the direction of a Board.

Millman, a successful businessman, seemed perfect for CEO. He found a way to borrow $1.8-million from the U.S. Amateur Boxing Foundation. But when the Board objected to how he was spending and investing that money, the USOC stepped in like a traffic cop, stopping the Board and waving Millman on.

The Foundation later proved in court that USA Boxing had no right to borrow that money in the first place. By then, of course, it was gone and all that was left was the debt. Millman's claim that "the economy" was to blame for his master plan's demise is only partly accurate. He simply made bad business moves.

"We have to do our due diligence," said Tom Virgets, chairman of the USA Boxing Board of Directors and one of the most knowledgeable and respected figures in amateur boxing. "USA Boxing has a history of operating with a welfare mentality—give us something for nothing." That "something," of course, is funding. Without USOC support, there's not much of it for USA Boxing.

"The USOC was right to argue for the new means of governance," a system Virgets says is a good one, but "when the USOC lends its support to the CEO at the expense of the Board of Directors' oversight and strategic direction, then the balance becomes inappropriate." Not only did Millman have too much power, the USOC failed to honor its side of the new arrangement.

Of greater concern to Virgets is the USOC's self-identity as an enforcer. "We need a partner, a USOC that appreciates that boxing is not like gymnastics or soccer."

USA Boxing needs program-development dollars from the USOC, and not just support for Olympic athletes. Youth in other sports come supported by funds raised through their many clubs and community organizations. "The USOC does an outstanding job of funding our elite athlete program. Unfortunately, we are losing a significant portion of our elite athlete potential due to a broken grassroots infrastructure," argued Virgets.

There was a time when boxing was supported by a network of feeder programs—YMCAs, JCCs, Boys & Girls Clubs, and CYOs, "organizations with lofty mission statements," said Virgets, about young people and how important boxing programs can be to their development. But the network has been lost due to the misperception of boxing as a sport that encourages violence and one where injuries abound. Insurance rates have driven the cost of these programs through the roof. "Ironically," Virgets said, "the rate of injury in amateur boxing is far lower than it is in other contact sports."

The success of the elite program will not be enough to revitalize the grassroots feeder programs. "What if USA Boxing had won eight gold medals in 2012, then what?" asked Virgets. "We would have a great deal of interest but no infrastructure to accommodate this interest. We lack gyms, adequately trained coaches and officials, and venues to put on competitions."

Until the USOC becomes a partner with USA Boxing, and deals with its challenges head on, our athletes will be the ones who suffer the consequences. ■

U.S. National Tournament Results

June 8-13, 2009, Denver, Colorado

Senior Female

101 lbs: Laura Ramirez, Bronx, NY, dec. Paola Arana, Duarte, CA
106 lbs: Marlen Esparza, Houston, TX, dec. Marina Ramirez, Parma, ID
112 lbs: Seniesa Estrada, Los Angeles, CA, dec. Cynthia Moreno, Phoenix, AZ
119 lbs: Sacred Downing, Trenton, NJ, dec. Rita Martinez, Las Cruces, NM
125 lbs: Melissa Roberts, Camp Lejeune, NC, dec. Deirdre Rhodes, St. Louis, MO
132 lbs: Patricia Manuel, Commerce, CA, dec. Tiara Brown, Columbus, SC
141 lbs: Queen Underwood, Seattle, WA, dec. Jennifer Fenn, Cedar Creek, TX
152 lbs: Andrecia Wasson, Centerline, MI, dec. Brittany Inkrote, Red Lion, PA
165 lbs: Alyssa Defazio, Peoria, AZ, dec. Qurdisha Gilliam, Fort Valley, GA
178 lbs: Chaquita Hemingway dec. Tyler Lord Wilder, Lansing, MI
178+ lbs: Traynora Locke, Lexington, KY, dec. Sonya Lamonakis, New York, NY

Senior Male:

106 lbs: Miguel Cartagena, Philadelphia, PA, dec. Garen Rabellizsa, Waianae, HI
112 lbs: Louie Byrd, Denver, CO, TKO 3 Adam Ortiz, Sterling, IL
119 lbs: Jesus Magdaleno, Las Vegas, NV, dec. Luis Rosa, East Haven, CT
125 lbs: Kevin Rivers, Landover, MD, dec. Jerren Cochran, Channelview, TX
132 lbs: Duran Caferro Jr., Helena, MT, dec. Adrian Martinez, Milwaukee, WI
141 lbs: Frankie Gomez, Los Angeles, CA, dec. Jose Benavidez, Phoenix, AZ
152 lbs: Errol Spence, Desoto, TX, dec. Eduardo Alicea, Cleveland, OH
165 lbs: Terrell Gausha, Cleveland, OH, DQ 3 Jesse Hart, Marquette, MI
178 lbs: Robert Brant, Oakdale, MN, dec. Sijuola Shabazz, Las Cruces, NM,
201 lbs: Jordan Shimmell, Hudsonville, MI, dec. Nicholas Kisner, Glen Burmie, MD
202+ lbs: Michael Hunter, Las Vegas, NV, dec. Javier Torres, Medford, OR

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Hepatitis B And Boxing: What Are The Risks?

THE RING magazine heavyweight champion Wladimir Klitschko stopped Ruslan Chagaev at the end of the ninth round on June 21, demonstrating his dominance before 61,000 fans at a German soccer stadium. But did he really lose by placing himself at risk for the potentially chronic or deadly hepatitis B virus?

Chagaev was actually scheduled to fight Nicolay Valuev for the WBA heavyweight title the previous month in Helsinki, but the bout was called off when Finnish physicians discovered that Chagaev tested positive for hepatitis B. Instead, Chagaev benefited from "commission shopping" and was cleared to compete in Germany, where they have a different set of rules regarding eligibility.

According to promotional company Universum, "After achieving hepatitis B many years ago, Chagaev has never been sick due to hepatitis B. He is just a healthy carrier of the hepatitis antigen with constantly normal liver enzymes ... According to international expert opinions, Ruslan Chagaev is regarded as non-infectious."

What is true and what is the fact?

Boxing is a blood sport; this is a given. Athletes of all ages, especially those who participate in contact sports ranging from MMA and boxing to football, soccer, and hockey have a small but omnipresent risk of contracting hepatitis B unless they have been previously immunized.

Hepatitis B has resulted in epidemics in parts of Africa and Asia and is endemic (naturally occurring) in China. About one-third of the world population has been infected with the virus. It is believed to be more easily transmitted than HIV by exposure to infectious bodily fluids (including sweat) and blood.

PHOTO BY CLEMENS BILAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Should Chagaev have been allowed to fight Wladimir?

Unprotected sex, blood transfusions, needle sharing, and transmission from mother to child in childbirth can also pass on the infection.

The Center for Disease Control notes that 1.25 million Americans live with chronic hepatitis B; 60,000 are newly diagnosed each year, and 5,000 per year die from hepatitis B related complications.

Acute hepatitis B symptoms include loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, mild fever, body aches, dark urine, itchy skin, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes). Occasionally, severe liver failure will occur. Chronic infection can be asymptomatic or be associated with chronic hepatitis leading to cirrhosis (liver degeneration) or liver cancer.

The hepatitis B surface antigen is the most commonly used way to screen for the infection. This is what the Finnish doctors found in Chagaev. Hepatitis B infection can clear within weeks or months, and once cleared, the person will demonstrate antibodies.

Dr. Tram Tran, medical director of the Liver Disease and Transplant Center at Los Angeles' Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, noted, "More than 95 percent of those infected will stage a full recovery and go on to develop a protective immunity."

As a result, most do not need treatment, as the infection will clear spontaneously. Their *antigen* test will be negative, but their *antibody* test will register positive. However, if someone tests positive for the antigen six months following infection, they are considered a chronic carrier.

According to New Jersey Chief Ringside Physician Dominic Coletta, "New Jersey has never licensed (to my knowledge) an untreated or actively positive Hep B fighter. If a fighter is treated and can show in his/her blood work that they are no longer infectious (demonstrate antibodies), they can usually resume their career."

Henry Akinwande is a good example. In 1998, Akinwande was scheduled to challenge then-WBA and IBF heavyweight titleholder Evander Holyfield at Madison Square Garden for a purse of more than $2-million. New York State prefight testing picked up that Akinwande was hepatitis B positive for the antigen. A repeat test confirmed the result of an active infectious state, and the fight was canceled.

Akinwande underwent further testing and treatment and continued to fight, including in Nevada against Oliver McCall in 2001 and in New Jersey in 2005.

There are other hepatitis B positive boxers who have continued their careers. This is not just because they have drifted toward lenient commission or commissions that do not even test for the virus (including many in the United States).

In 2008, the Food and Drug Administration approved the first test to quantify the degree of hepatitis B infection by looking at the amount of viral DNA. It is believed that a negligible amount reflects an essentially zero risk of infectiousness.

Several years ago, the Nevada State Athletic Commission, one of the first to test for hepatitis B, met with UCLA liver and infectious disease experts. They subsequently permitted fighters like Akinwande to compete if he/she had produced a negative viral-DNA test performed no longer than 14 days before a bout.

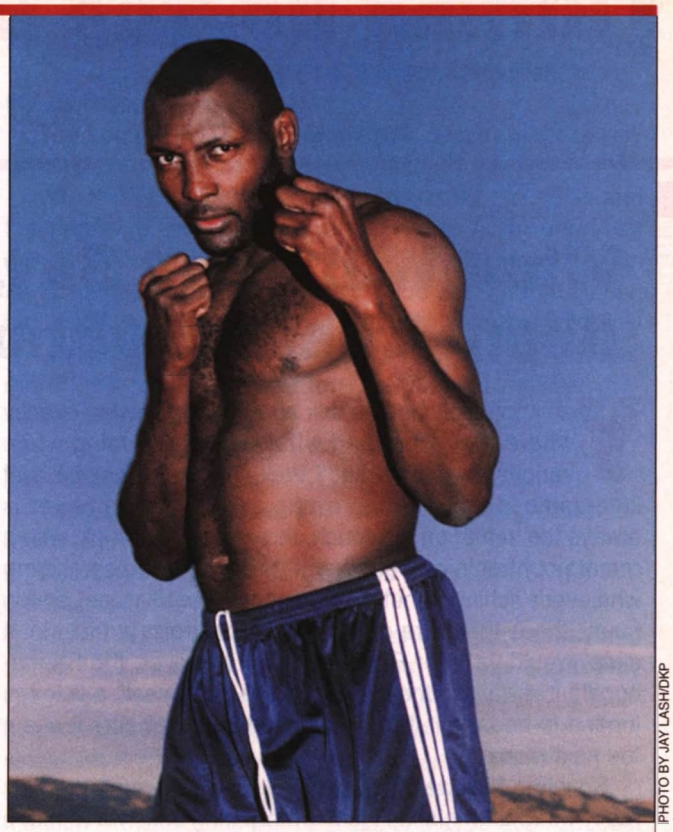


PHOTO BY JAY LASH/DKP

Akinwande recovered from hepatitis and continued fighting

Other medical experts disagree, and believe that despite a low viral DNA titer the risk is not zero, and everyone who works ringside, including the fighter's opponent, referee, judges, physicians, cornermen, television crew, and fans could be exposed via blood spatter.

Tran indicates it could take anywhere from one to six months to know if someone has contracted the virus following exposure. Commissions testing only once a year may miss an infected boxer. Testing previously negative fighters every six months would be more reasonable.

Prevention is the key, and everyone who works in boxing should be immunized. This entails receiving three injections over a six-month period. The side effects and risks of immunization are rare and the immunization should last at least 15 years.

It is difficult to prevent an infection if you don't know you have the illness or are at risk of exposure to blood from individuals who have not been tested. Therefore, every commission, both here in the U.S. and around the world should have uniform policies on testing, including the frequency with which athletes are tested.

Coletta notes, "If a commission has done its job properly, the boxer is really at no significant risk from coming in contact with his/her opponent's blood. Immunization makes sense. It is a bloody sport and the fighter can't wear a full-body condom!" ■

By Jim Bagg

What Will They Say, Say, Say About These Fighters?

You know how people talk about remembering exactly where they were and what they were doing when various celebrities died? Well, for the Baggtastic, that little game is really uninteresting, because the answer is always the same: on his couch, three-quarters drunk, with a remote control in one hand and the other hand scratching whatever's itching. Whether it's Kennedy, or Elvis, or Lennon (okay, those three pre-dated remote controls, but just let it slide, would ya?), or Princess Di, or whoever, the Baggaroodle is always in the same position, by himself, a little too loaded to be sure if the news is real until he hears it again the next morning.

So when Michael Jackson died in June (assuming he's really dead and this isn't just a marketing scheme to make him relevant again), there was the Baggster, on the couch, a few empty bottles by his side. And, call the Baggmeister a cold-hearted jerk, but his first thought was, *Oh well, one less weirdo.*

You see, there are two ways to remember Michael Jackson: as the "King Of Pop," a chart-topping, record-selling, dance-inventing machine; or as a freak show so off-the-rails that Mike Tyson thinks to himself, *Damn, that guy had problems.* Of course, Jacko was both, but for Baggo, it's the latter version that comes to mind first. Sure, Jackson first made his name as a musical artist, but to the world's greatest boxing columnist, his legacy is as the guy who turned white, had more nose jobs than Sean O'Grady, went to trial for child molestation, and dangled his kid off a balcony.

Interestingly, however, in the days immediately following his death, the wacko Jacko got swept under the rug by most in the media, and instead, the whole world seemed to be paying tribute to a musical icon. It was almost like the last 20 years never happened, as everybody just gushed over the first time they heard *Thriller* or the first time Jackson did the moonwalk.

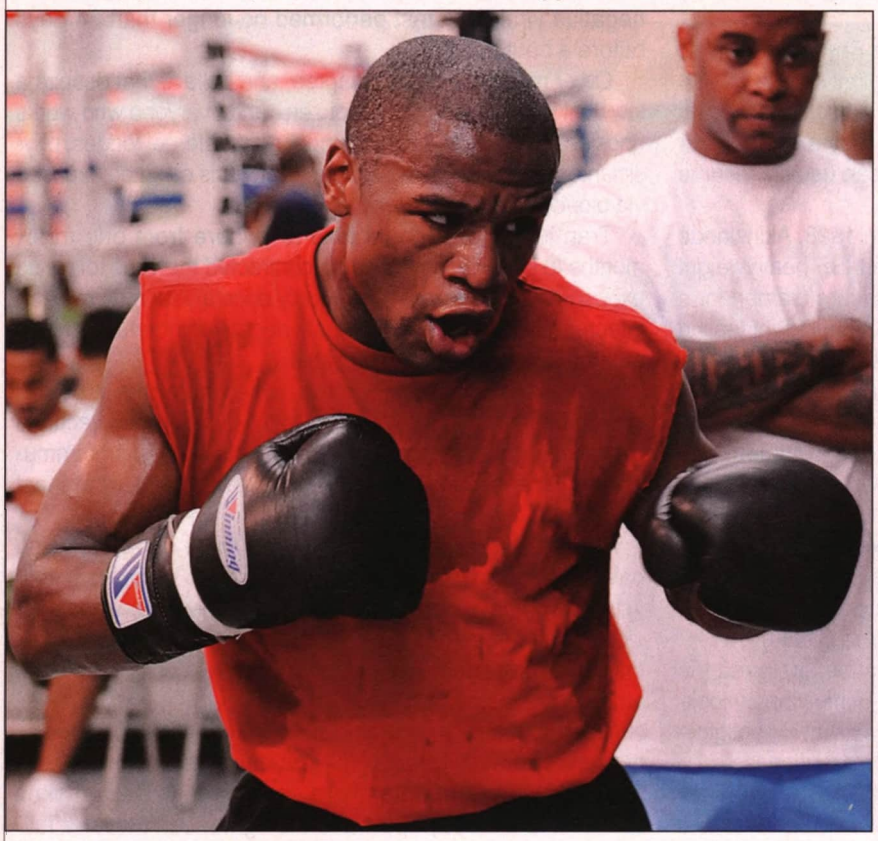


PHOTO BY DENISE TRUSCELLO/WIREIMAGES

Mayweather: What will history say?

And it got the Baggson Five thinking: Which boxers out there should be praying to get the Jacko treatment? There are plenty of active fighters who've established two distinct legacies and could be remembered either very positively or very negatively when they're done fighting. So the Baggamaniac made a list, limited to fighters who are far enough into their careers that their legacies aren't totally wide open (for example, there's no sense arguing if Yuriorkis Gamboa will be remembered as a legend or a hype job because 90 percent of his legacy-establishing fights lie ahead of him).

Here are some active fighters who have both a little *Thriller* and a little Wacko Jacko in them and will leave their legacies largely in the hands of the fans and media:

Floyd Mayweather

The Legacy He Hopes For: An all-time great technician and talent who ruled the pound-for-pound list in his prime.

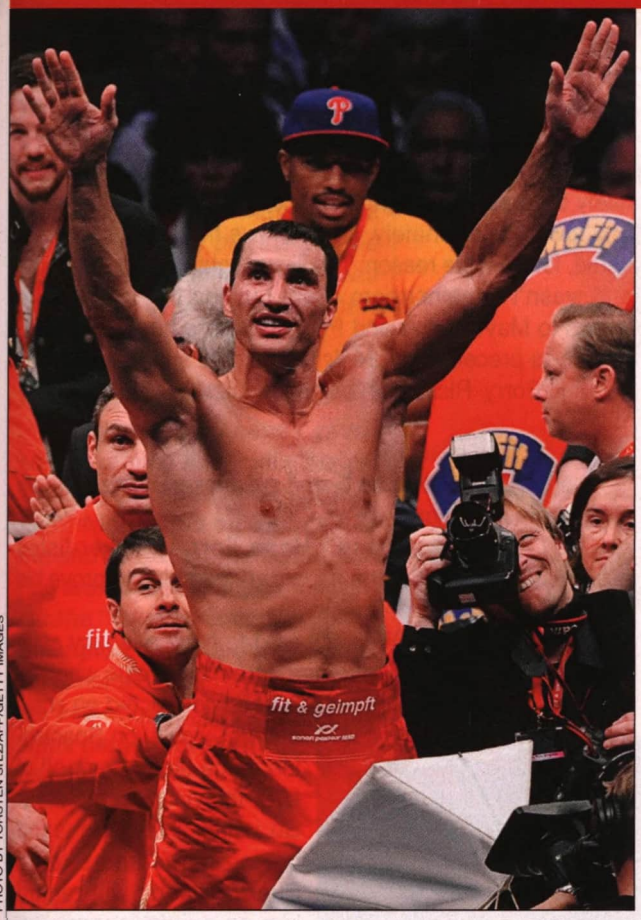


PHOTO BY TORSTEN SILZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Wladimir: Jury still deliberating

The Legacy He Doesn't Hope For: An unpopular jerk who ducked everyone.

Which Will It Be? Because he did not, in fact, duck everyone—he beat Oscar De La Hoya, Ricky Hatton, Diego Corrales, Jose Luis Castillo, etc., while also avoiding a few dangerous foes—Mayweather will probably be remembered first for his talent. (Assuming, that is, that he isn't remembered first for being a rap music impresario.)

Wladimir Klitschko

The Legacy He Hopes For: A dominant heavyweight force with Hall of Fame creds.

The Legacy He Doesn't Hope For: A chinny oaf who was lucky to fight in the worst heavyweight era in 100 years.

Which Will It Be? The next couple of years are crucial. One more knockout loss to an also-ran (and let's face it, everybody out there for him to fight is an also-ran), and Wlad gets the words "Chinny Oaf" chiseled into his tombstone. A couple more years on top without a kayo loss, and he gets some Hall consideration. Considering how adept he's become at jabbing, grabbing, conserving energy, and staying out of danger, combined with the awful assortment of challengers he has to choose from, look for Klitschko to keep winning a while and crack some "top 20 heavyweights of all-time" discussions. (And yes, the Baggaroni needs a barf-Bagg after typing that phrase.)

Miguel Cotto

The Legacy He Hopes For: A thrilling warrior and a worthy successor to Felix Trinidad.

The Legacy He Doesn't Hope For: A warrior whose lack of hand speed and defense held him back.

Which Will It Be? It can be both—those slow fists and the inability to avoid punches are a big part of why Bagg Van Winkle has never nodded off during a Cotto fight. He's fun *because* he's limited. But he's still good enough that he can be competitive against the elite. He won't compare favorably to Trinidad in the final analysis, but he'll still be remembered more for what he did than for what his weaknesses prevented him from doing.

Roy Jones

The Legacy He Hopes For: One of the five greatest talents in boxing history.

The Legacy He Doesn't Hope For: One of the five greatest illusions in boxing history.

Which Will It Be? This will certainly anger the devoted Jones fans who still insist you could line up Sugar Ray Robinson, Archie Moore, and Ezzard Charles side-by-side-by-side and Roy would knock all three of them out with a single left hook, but his brutal kayo losses have erased the memories of his greatness to a large degree for anyone to mention him alongside the 10 or 20, or maybe even 50, best fighters ever. The fact that he put his prodigious talent on display against so many Bryant Brannons and Ricky Fraziers

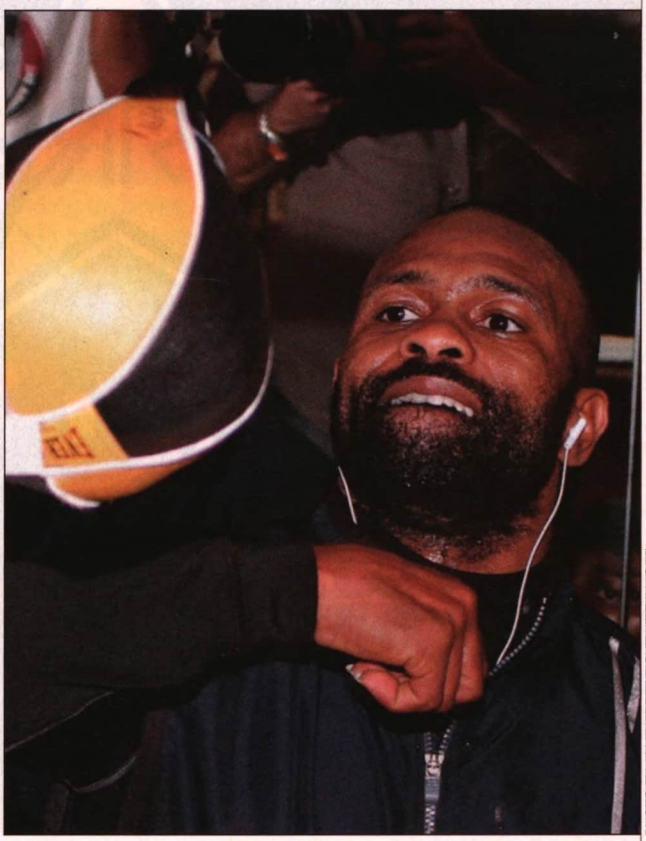


PHOTO BY JIM EVERETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Jones: Will kayo losses soil legacy?

doesn't exactly overrule the impression that he never had a chin and went to great lengths to prevent us from discovering that.

Jermain Taylor

The Legacy He Hopes For: An underrated fighter who never lost by much.

The Legacy He Doesn't Hope For: An overrated fighter who never won by much.

Which Will It Be? Actually, neither. Taylor will probably be remembered for his knockout losses to Kelly Pavlik and Carl Froch, but it will be the dramatic endings that are recalled, not the strong work Taylor did until that point. So it'll be the worst of both worlds, as he leaves an image in fans' minds of a guy slumped in the corner with a ref saving him. Unfortunately, when you receive as much hype as Taylor did, history penalizes you more if you don't live up to it.

Ricky Hatton

The Legacy He Hopes For: A great pressure fighter who ended Kostya Tszyu's career.

The Legacy He Doesn't Hope For: A chinny mauler who got dusted in his two biggest fights.

Which Will It Be? The good news for Hatton is that he'll have a dual legacy: one of the above, plus recognition as a phenomenal British gate attraction. His popularity will definitely be a part of the picture, along with his in-ring highs and lows. Unfortunately, it's the lows that will be remembered, for a simple reason: The Tszyu fight was on Showtime and wasn't a mainstream event outside of the U.K. The losses to Mayweather and Pacquiao were huge HBO pay-per-views preceded by *24/7s* that casual sports fans knew about it. Sorry, Ricky, but "chinny mauler" it is.

Ivan Calderon

The Legacy He Hopes For: A superior craftsman and an all-time great little guy.

The Legacy He Doesn't Hope For: A feather-fisted nobody who didn't take the necessary gambles to prove his greatness.

Which Will It Be? Well, it's hard to have a legacy at all if nobody outside of the ultra-hardcore have a clue who you are. Calderon's entire career has been conducted on small pay-per-views, on Spanish-language stations, or off of U.S. television completely. So while a few thousand boxing nerds and a lot of Puerto Ricans will regard him as a little legend, the great majority will just say, "Ivan who?" (In other words, it'll sound like a bookstore hosting one of Goldman's book signings.)

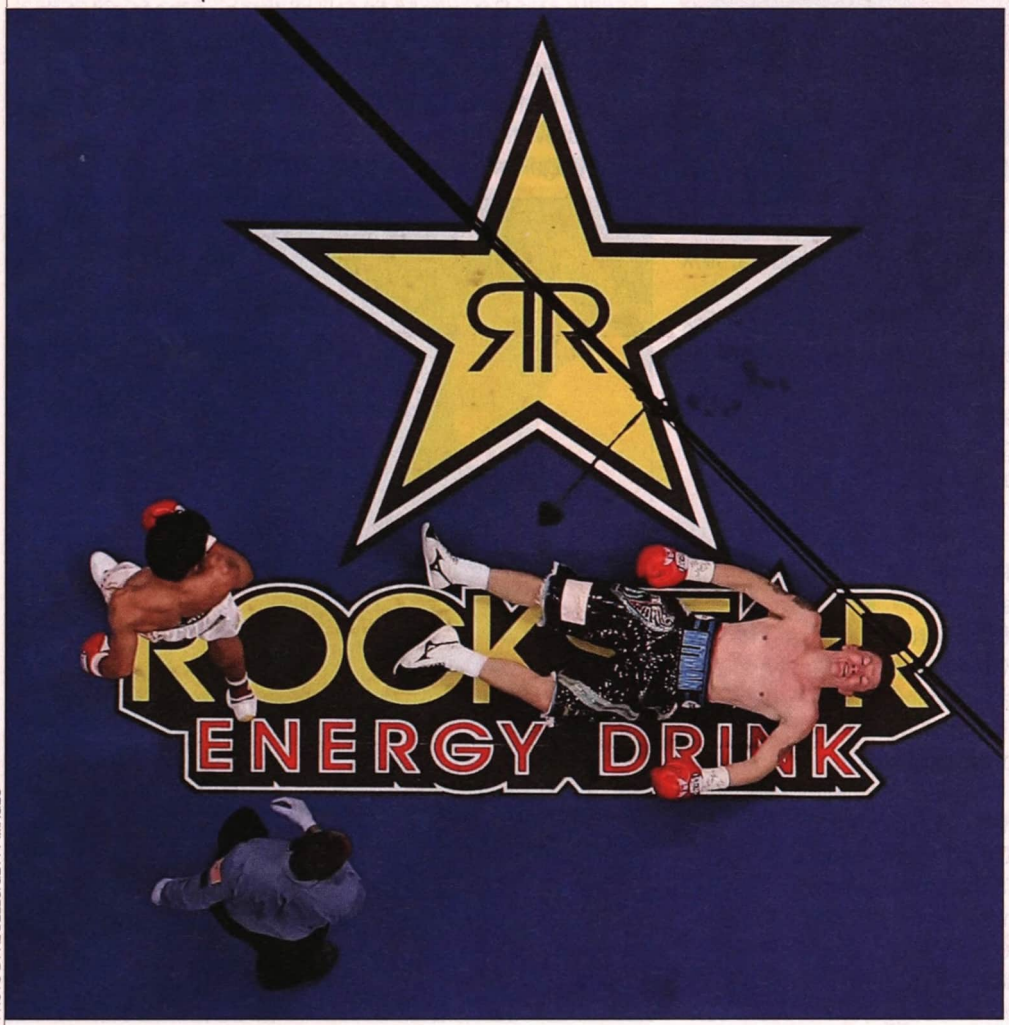


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Hatton: Is this how we will remember Ricky?

Evander Holyfield

The Legacy He Hopes For: One of the most courageous and determined heavyweights ever.

The Legacy He Doesn't Hope For: One of the most stupid and stubborn heavyweights ever.

Which Will It Be? Isn't it appropriate that we end with a guy who's been in the spotlight almost as long as Michael Jackson? And a guy who owns a ridiculous mansion? The problem is, thanks to all of the women he got pregnant, Evander's mansion is now known as the "Never-Planned Ranch," and it's reached the point

The Monthly Mailbagg

With summer re-runs in full effect, the Baggleader thought about taking the lazy way out and re-running reader e-mails from a few months ago, but instead he went the extra mile just for you with these brand spankin' new e-mails:

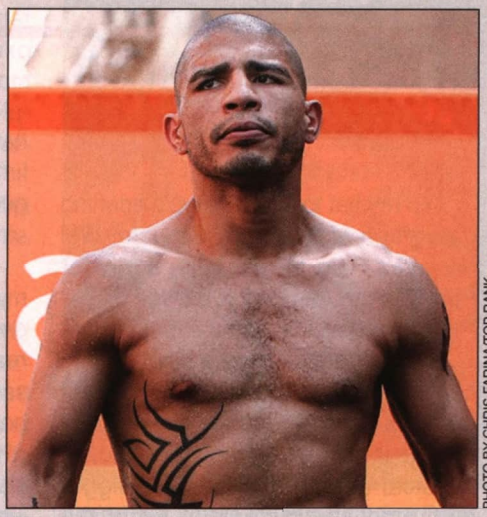


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Readers will have to wait for Bagg's Cotto-Pacquiao pick

Hey Baggmeister,

I realize boxing needs sponsors to remain financially viable, but did you see the first show of *Fight Night Club* on Versus? At the end of one of the fights, the ring announcer declared the winner the "Quaker State Durability Champion." Come on! Baseball fields named after banks and orange juice manufacturers are bad enough, but now we have so-called championships named for corporate entities? Tell me this was a bad dream.

Rob Shoemaker
Brooklyn, NY

Shoemakermeister,

The Baggnoceros is sorry to inform you that it wasn't a dream. But still, it could have been worse. The show could have been sponsored by Viagra or Trojan.

Hi Jim,

You predicted Pacquiao over Oscar and said Pac would crush Hatton. Can we get a quick pick on Pacquiao vs. Cotto? I plan to wager based on what you say. (But don't expect a cut if I win.)

Craig B.

Craig,

If a quick pick is what you want, a quick pick is what you'll get: a 12-round draw. And yes, that's a phony prediction made out of spite because you want the Baggatollah's advice but don't want to spread the wealth if he's correct. Good luck with that one at the betting window, you stingy ingrate. (For the real pick from Baggstradamus, you'll just have to wait until the fight is a little closer.)

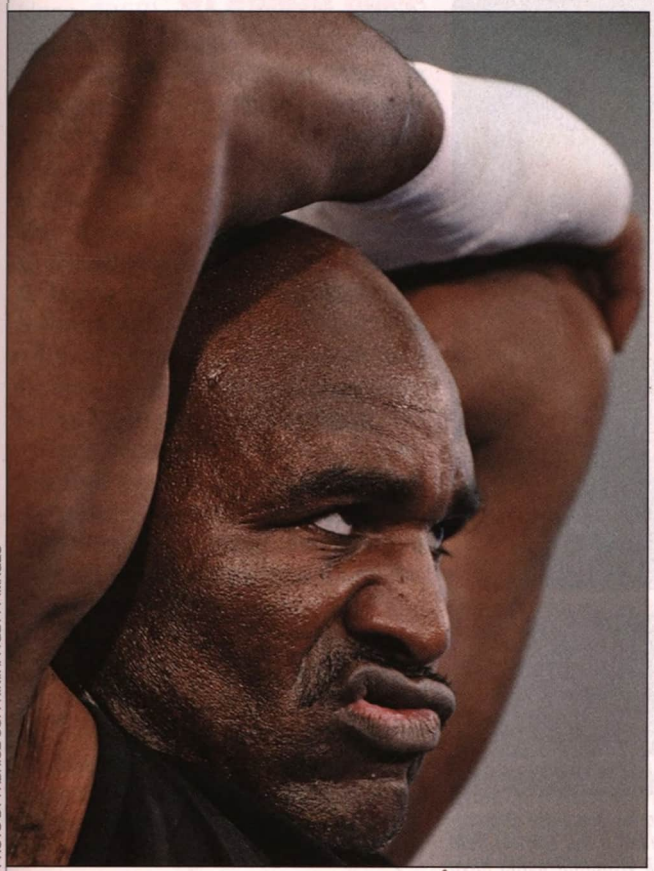


PHOTO BY FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Holyfield: Have fans forgotten how good he used to be?

where he can't pay for it anymore. Sad as it is to admit since Holyfield is one of the Baggmometer's favorite fighters ever, he's turned more into a cautionary tale than a legendary overachiever. And that's how "The Real Deal" will most likely be remembered. Not for his great fights with Dwight Qawi and Michael Dokes and George Foreman and Riddick Bowe, but for getting his ear bitten and ending up broke.

In other words, his legacy is like the Baggly-Waggly's, except with a little less ear.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

Juan Manuel Garay, who won one for journeymen, for old guys, and for road warriors everywhere with his upset of Martin Kempf in Berlin, Germany, in June. The 37-year-old Argentine came into the backyard of his 21-year-old opponent, and the records looked nothing alike: Kempf was 12-0 (5), and Garay was 15-8 (10). We've seen matchups like that on undercards a million times, and about 999,972 of those times, the undefeated kid won as expected. But this was one of the rare exceptions, as the man knocked the boy down twice in the fourth round to score a TKO win.

It's not easy being old and Garay. But it's apparently better than having a last name that sounds like a sneeze. The Baggnacious just hopes the old trialhorse was polite enough to say gezundheit before saying goodnight. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

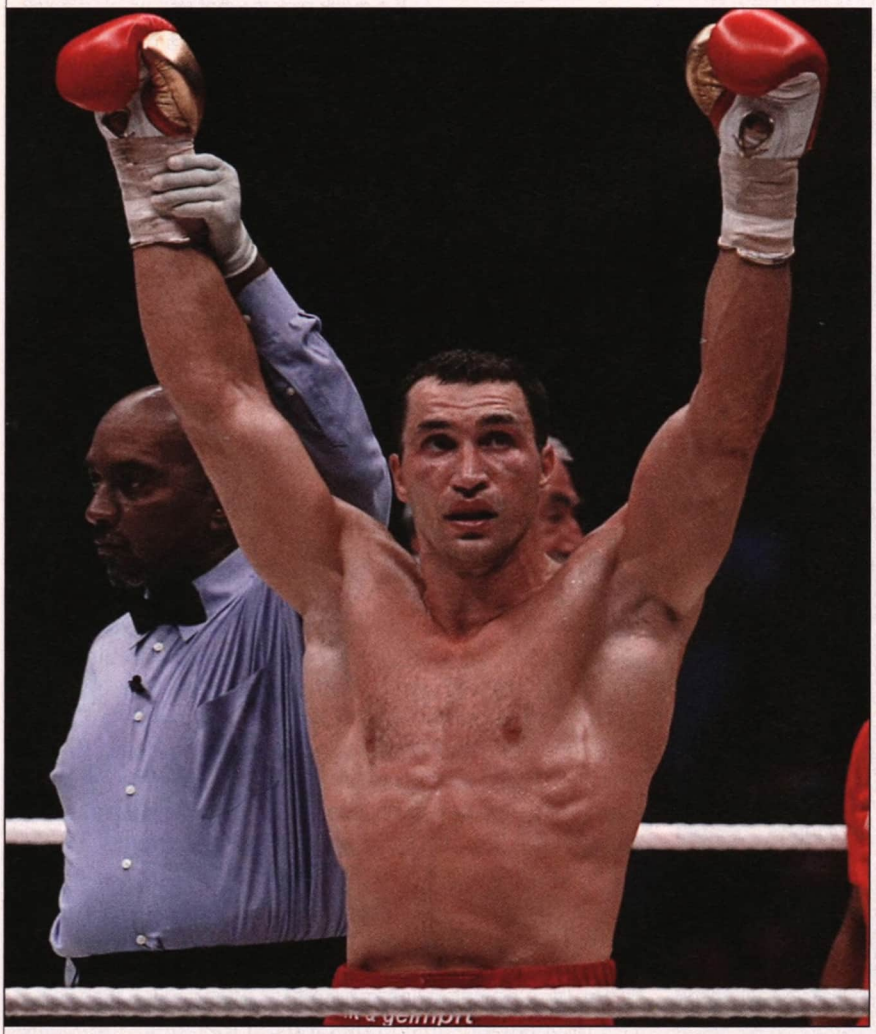
The Ultimate Consumer

I tip my hat to David Mayo's opening paragraph of "Money's Gamble: Will Marquez Ruin Mayweather's Master Plan?" in the August 2009 issue of THE RING, which reads:

"Boxing fans occupy a unique position in the sports world, if only for their unabated propensity for chewing up their best athletes with unyielding new physical demands. Fight the bigger guy. Fight the faster guy. Fight the harder puncher. Fight until we find your limits, the challenge you cannot conquer. Then, satiate us again by demonstrating how you bounce back from it."

I don't think anyone has summed up my unconscious desires so well as I turn on the TV each week. It was a startling realization to me that we don't ask the same of *any* other athlete. In a sense, boxing fans are the ultimate consumers of what they watch. Mayo's psychoanalysis left me in awe at the men and women who can walk from the dressing room to the ring and remain focused in the face of those demands and prevail. That is why I love the sport so much and I will now appreciate fighters even more with this in the forefront of my thoughts.

JOHN EDWARDS
St. Paul, MN



A number of readers wrote to comment on Wladimir Klitschko, the new RING heavyweight champion. Jeremy Guerrieri credits Wladimir for being willing to fight the best, even if the current field isn't that imposing. Bernard Freydberg isn't so generous and doesn't think Wladimir could have competed with the great heavyweights of the 1970s.

Two Views Of The New Champ

I can't help but be impressed with Wladimir Klitschko's easy win over Ruslan Chagaev. He still is a little too cautious, though, especially when he has his opponent in trouble. He could have finished Chagaev on several occasions. He is big and very difficult to hit and chooses to dismantle his opponents from a safe distance, but he needs to close in and finish it when it's time.

Give Wladimir credit, though. He has fought all of the big names available, regardless of their talent and cannot be blamed for the state of the heavyweight challengers. Hopefully, there will be a real challenge for him before he decides to retire.

JEREMY GUERRIERI
Painesville, OH

THE RING's decision to sanction the Wladimir Klitschko-Ruslan Chagaev fight for its heavyweight championship is surely justified, and Klitschko won decisively. I cannot, however, find it in my heart to offer congratulations to the new champion, whose first instinct is to

back up whenever he senses the possibility of engaging in battle. Moreover, I lack the courage to think of what would have happened to Klitschko against heavyweight champions from the previous generation such as Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, and Larry Holmes.

BERNARD FREYDBERG
Slippery Rock, PA

Lessons Learned

I was pleased to read about David Lemieux, the undefeated knockout artist from Canada, in the August 2009 issue. It is hard to believe that this is the same kid who appeared with his trainer Russ Anber in several Title Boxing Instructional DVDs. I guess the skills taught in these videos really do pay off!

TYLER OATES
Shippenville, PA

Informed Opinion

I was disappointed by a remark made by Jeff Ryan in "Ryan Out Loud" (June 2009) under the "Personal Perceptions" section. He does not agree with Muhammad Ali's attitude in and out of the ring. This is understandable, but calling him a "draft dodger" is completely unacceptable.

The term is often mistakenly synonymous with "coward," and many of us know Ali was not. Why should he fight a war that he does not believe in? I can sympathize with someone who is mistreated by his own government and asked to kill members of an even more marginalized population. Ali is a hero for standing against a war he thought was wrong. He did not need a gun to do it. Many others took similar nontraditional stances that may have seemed anti-American at the time. They paid with mockery, beatings, and even their lives.

I find Ryan's remark callous and suggest he read a book such as *What's My Name, Fool* by Dave Zirin to round out his perspective. I agree that everybody is entitled to an opinion, but an informed opinion is much more worthy of print.

MARC LA FLECHE
Columbia, SC

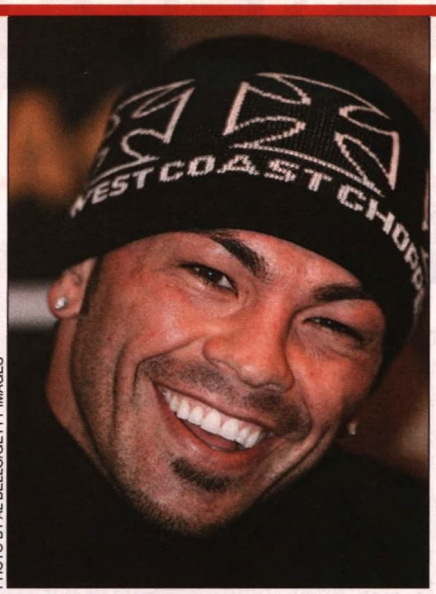
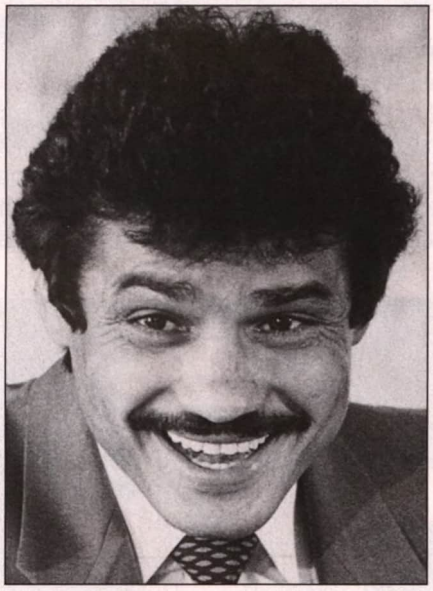


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Boxing fans around the world are heartbroken over the untimely and tragic deaths of Arturo Gatti (above) and Alexis Arguello (below). Among those who wrote to pay tribute were Bernard Aguirre and Bobby Davis.



Fallen Heroes

I want to pay quick tributes to two warriors who both tragically died in such a short space of time. Alexis Arguello was one of the finest champions I've ever seen and what impressed me most, besides his fighting ability, was his attitude. He is one of the nicest guys boxing has ever seen. I was especially impressed by his fight with Ray Mancini. Not only did he put on a good performance against a younger guy, but he was nice enough to give him words of encouragement.

Arturo Gatti is one of the bravest and most determined champions I've ever seen. No matter who was in the other corner, he always gave it his all and never gave up.

Rest in peace, guys. Boxing is poorer without you both.

BERNARDO AGUIRRE
Sydney, Australia

I am a 22-year-old diehard boxing fan, and I owe that to Arturo Gatti. I began watching boxing intently in 2002 and saw the Gatti-Micky Ward trilogy. Afterward, I was a boxing junkie and every Gatti fight was an event for me. I cannot put into words how much I idolized this man.

For years I've had pictures of him I cut out of THE RING magazine and pinned up on my wall. Once in a career you may see a man come back from the brink of defeat to win. Gatti made this seemingly impossible task routine.

God bless you, Arturo. You are my hero.

BOBBY DAVIS
Goldonna, LA

Time To Go, Ricky

After seeing a video of Ricky Hatton on July 4, I was amazed to see that he has again piled on the weight. Never have I seen him so big. He cannot move his neck without moving the rest of his body. What happened to meeting Floyd Mayweather Sr. halfway over his lifestyle? Ricky simply can't expect to shed that amount of weight, time and again. It's going to take a toll on the body.

When Manny Pacquiao connected with that left hand, Hatton was out cold before he hit the deck. I feared for him because it reminded me of Roy Jones against Glen Johnson—Jones lying stiff on the canvas. Thankfully, Hatton wasn't badly injured, but I feel he has taken the resolve out of his body with all the weight drain. It's impossible to abuse your body like that and remain at the top. In my opinion, Hatton needs to call it a day. The talk of facing Amir Khan is preposterous. Khan would beat Hatton; he's too quick. Still, whatever Ricky does. I wish him well.

ANDY PATERSON
Glasgow, Scotland ■

By Don Stewart

Can Matthew Find The Magic Against Judah?

Matthew "Magic" Hatton isn't a betting man, but with the odds he's getting against **Zab Judah**, he says he might be tempted to put some money on himself.

The younger brother of former world junior welterweight champion **Ricky Hatton** is already taking a sizeable gamble by agreeing to face Judah on the undercard of **Floyd Mayweather-Juan Manuel Marquez**, which was rescheduled for September 19 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. For the 28-year-old Brit, it's a chance to step away from Ricky's shadow, though the odds are long.

Hatton, 37-4-1 (14), has won four in a row since leaving trainer **Billy Graham** for **Lee Beard**, including an impressive decision against former contender **Ben Tackie**, but Judah represents a giant leap in class. Judah, 37-6 (25), has just three wins in his last eight bouts, but the 31-year-old is still ranked number eight at welterweight by THE RING, and he was still good enough to nearly knock off **Joshua Clottey** last August.

"I know what I'm up against," said Hatton, whose previous six U.S. fights have all come on his brother's undercards. "Zab Judah is still one of the best welterweights in the world. It's a fight I'm going into with everything to gain and nothing to lose."

Judah is faster and stronger than Hatton, who doesn't have a great track record against slick southpaws. In May 2008, in his last fight with Graham, Hatton was thoroughly outboxed by countryman **Craig Watson**.

But, as always, there are questions surrounding Judah, who was less than impressive in his last outing, a 10-round decision against an outclassed **Ernest Johnson**. How much does Judah have left, and will he be in shape? Disciplined and determined, Hatton is a solid boxer with some slickness, even if his punches don't carry nearly as much pop as those of his brother. If he's still standing after four or five rounds, there's a chance Hatton could outwork and outbox Judah in the latter half of their 10-rounder.

"Matthew can win the fight," said Beard in a video posted on Hatton Promotions website. "Matthew is taking a huge chance, a huge risk. It's a big step up in level of fighter. The skill Judah has, he's on par with anybody. He's been in with all the top fighters. But it's a fight that Matthew thinks and I think he can win."

An upset loss to Hatton would almost certainly end Judah's run as a world-class fighter. For Hatton, there's much less at stake.

"Zab is by far the best fighter I've ever faced," he said. "To get a win in this fight, I'm going to have to lift me game by two, three levels. But I'm well capable of doing that. I know what I'm capable of.

"Only a few people have seen what I'm really capable of doing. I've shown it in patches. Inconsistencies have plagued me career. I believe I've sorted that problem out now. I've been very consistent of late. I'm really looking forward to this fight."

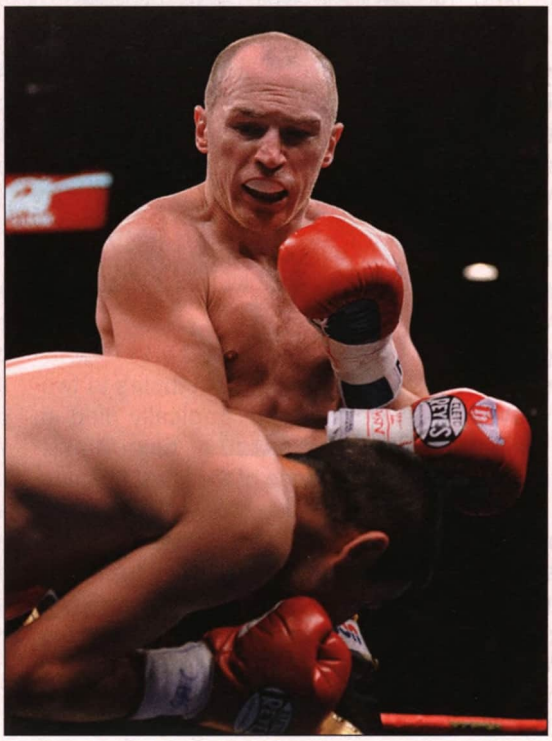


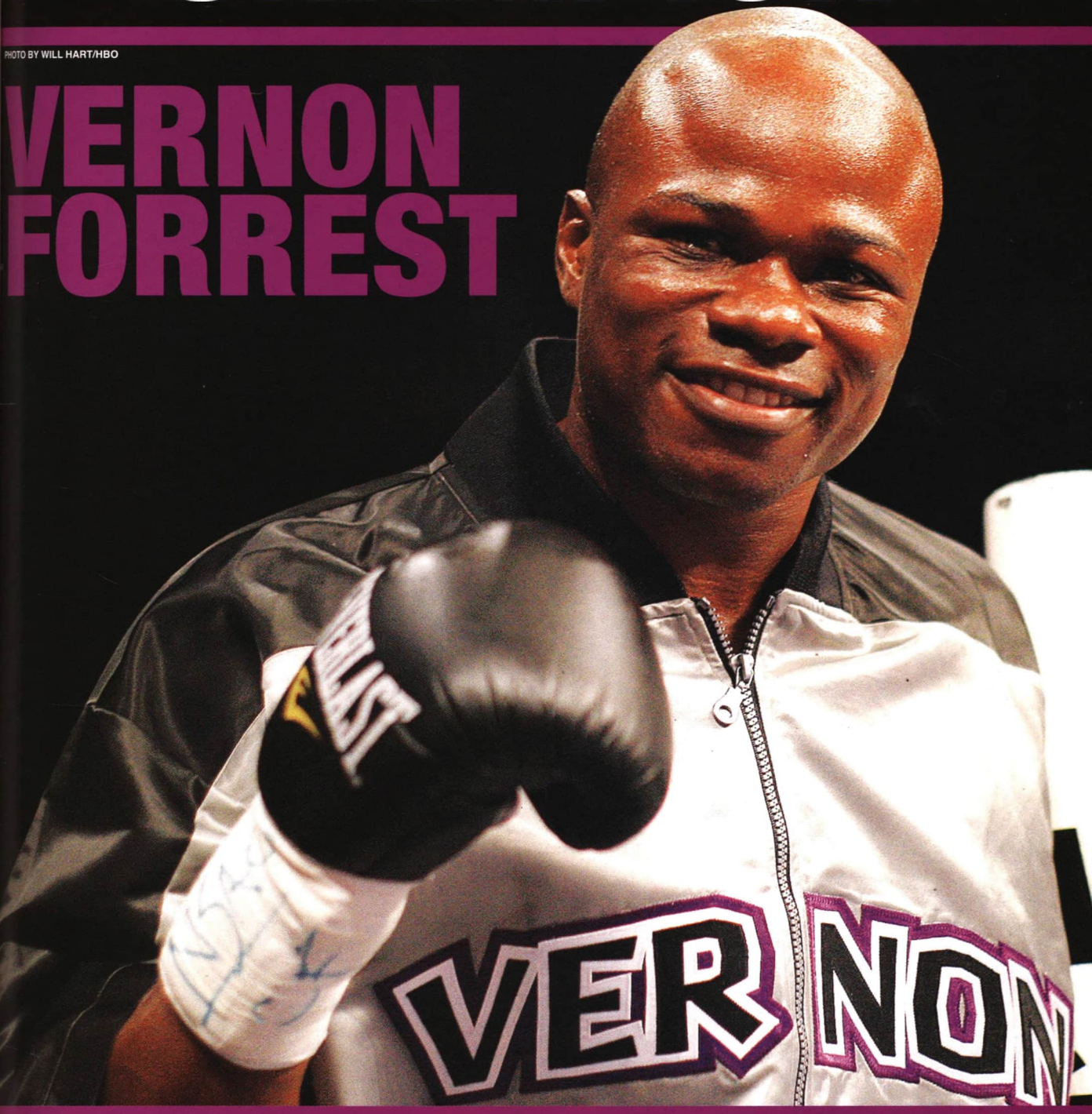
PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Hatton hopes to up his game vs. Judah

Listen Up

Sergio Martinez returns to Madrid, Spain, on September 26 to make his first defense of the WBC junior middleweight belt. Martinez, 44-1-2 (24), was elevated from interim titlist in May after the organization stripped **Vernon Forrest** for not facing the southpaw. Martinez' opponent was not set as of press time, though Spain's **Pablo Navascues**, 23-1-1 (16), was reportedly being considered ... The on-again, off-again **David Tua-Shane Cameron** heavyweight bout has been reset for October 3 in Hamilton, New Zealand. The fight is expected to be the biggest in the island nation's history. The 37-year-old Tua, 49-3-1 (42), is 11-0-1 in his last 12 outings dating back to a 2001 decision loss to **Chris Byrd**, though he's been off for two years due to a legal battle with his former managers. Initially set for June 6, the match was pushed back after the 31-year-old Cameron, 23-1 (20), sustained multiple hand fractures in a March tune-up victory against **Robert Davis**. Cameron has won four straight since suffering his only career defeat, a 12th-round stoppage loss to **Friday Ahunanya** in November 2007. ■

FOREVER OUR CHAMPION



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Alan Haymon, Sylvia Browne-Owens, Sam Watson, Marcus Watson, Wes Crockett and Gary Shaw

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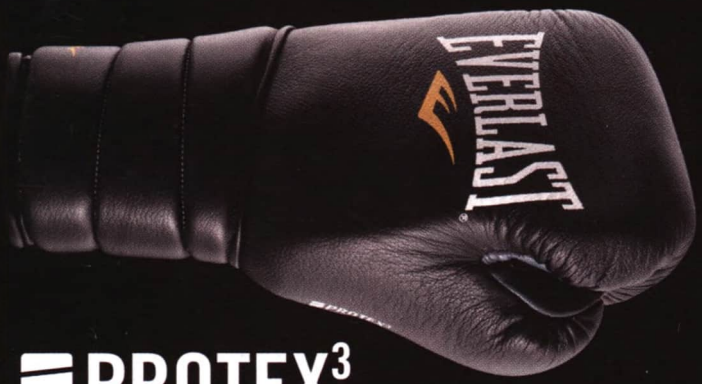

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